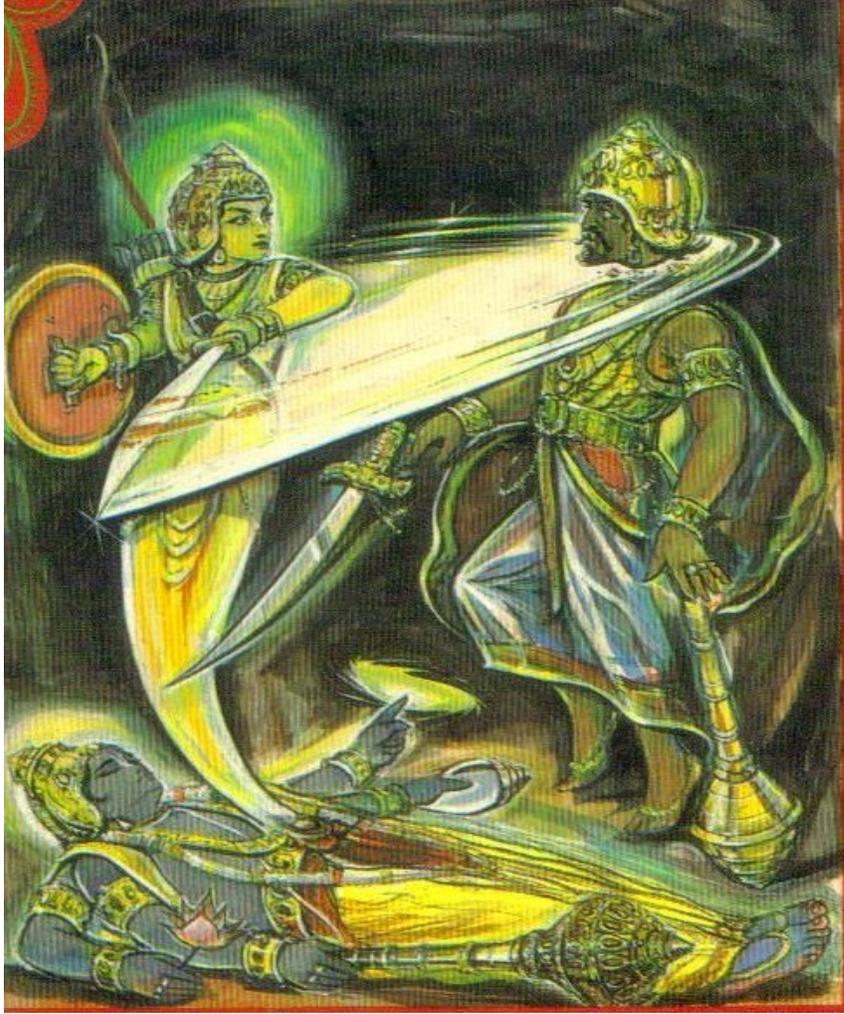


# Ekādaśī

## The Day of Lord Hari



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Uṭpannā Ekādaśī .....	5
Mokṣadā Ekādaśī .....	12
Saphalā Ekādaśī .....	16
Putradā Ekādaśī.....	20
Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī .....	24
Jayā Ekādaśī.....	29
Vijayā Ekādaśī .....	35
Āmalakī Ekādaśī .....	39
Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī .....	43
Kāmadā Ekādaśī.....	48
Varūthinī Ekādaśī.....	52
Mohinī Ekādaśī .....	55
Aparā Ekādaśī .....	59
Nirjalā Ekādaśī.....	62
Yoginī Ekādaśī.....	67
Padmā Ekādaśī .....	71
Kāmikā Ekādaśī .....	76
Putradā Ekādaśī.....	79
Ajā Ekādaśī.....	83
Parivartinī Ekādaśī .....	86
Indirā Ekādaśī .....	90
Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī.....	94
Ramā Ekādaśī.....	97
Haribodhinī Ekādaśī.....	102
Padminī Ekādaśī.....	109

Paramā Ekādaśī.....	115
Biography of the Author .....	119



*Srimati Ekadasi-devi manifested herself from the body of Lord Visnu and slew the demon Mura*

## Utpannā Ekādaśī

**S**ūta Goswami said, "O learned *brāhmaṇas*, long ago Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of God, explained the auspicious glories of Śrī Ekādaśī and the rules and regulations governing each observance of fasting on that holy day. O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, whosoever hears about the origins and glories of these sacred fasts on the Ekādaśī days goes directly to the abode of Lord Viṣṇu after enjoying many different kinds of happiness in this material world.

"Arjuna, the son of Pṛthā, asked the Lord, 'O Janārdana, what are the pious benefits of complete fasting, eating only supper, or eating but once at midday on Ekādaśī, and what are the regulations for observing the various Ekādaśī days? Kindly narrate all this to me'.

"The Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa replied, 'O Arjuna, in the beginning of winter (northern hemisphere), on the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa (November-December), a novice should begin his practice of observing a fast on Ekādaśī. On Daśamī, the day before Ekādaśī, he should clean his teeth nicely. Then during the eight portion of Daśamī, just as the Sun is about to set, he should eat supper.

"The next morning the devotee should make a vow, according to the rules and regulations, to observe fasting. At midday he should bathe properly in a river, lake or small pond. A bath in a river is most purifying, that taken in a lake is less so, and a bath in a small pond is the least purifying. If neither a river, lake nor pond is accessible, he may bathe with well-water.

"The devotee should chant this prayer containing the names of Mother Earth: "O Aśvakrānte! O Rathakrānte! O Viṣṇukrānte! O Vasundhare! O Mṛttike! O Mother Earth! Kindly remove all the sins I have accumulated throughout my many past lives so that I may enter the sacred abode of the Supreme Lord." As the devotee chants, he should smear mud over his body.

"During the day of fasting the devotee should not speak to those who are fallen from their religious duties, to dog-eaters, to thieves, or to hypocrites. He should also avoid speaking with slanderers; with those who abuse the demigods, the Vedic literatures, or *brāhmaṇas*; or with any other wicked personalities, such as those who have sex with forbidden women, those who are known plunderers, or those who rob temples. If any such person is spoken to or even seen during Ekādaśī, one must purify oneself by looking directly at the sun.

"Then the devotee should respectfully worship Lord Govinda with first-class food, flowers, and so forth. In his home he should offer the Lord a lamp in pure devotional consciousness. He should also avoid sleeping during the daytime and should completely abstain from sex. Fasting from all food and water, he should joyfully sing the Lord's glories and play musical instruments for His pleasure throughout the night. After remaining awake all night in pure consciousness, the worshipper should give charity to qualified *brāhmaṇas* and offer his humble obeisances unto them, begging their forgiveness for his offences.

"Those who are serious about devotional service should consider the Ekādaśīs that occur during dark fortnights to be as good as those that occur during bright fortnights. O king, one should never discriminate between these two kinds of Ekādaśī.

Please listen as I now describe the results obtained by one who observes Ekādaśī in this way. Neither the merit one receives by taking a bath in the sacred place of pilgrimage known as Śaṅkhoddhāra, where the Lord killed the Śaṅkhāsura demon, nor the merit one receives upon seeing Lord Gadadhāra directly is equal to one sixteenth of the merit one obtains by fasting on Ekādaśī. It is said that by giving charity on a Monday when the moon is full, one obtains a hundred thousand times the results of ordinary charity. O winner of wealth, one who gives charity on the day of the sankrānti (equinox) attains four hundred thousand times the ordinary result. Yet simply by fasting on Ekādaśī one obtains all these pious results, as well as whatever pious results one gets at Kurukṣetra during an eclipse of the sun or moon. Furthermore, the faithful soul who observes complete fasting on Ekādaśī achieves a hundred times more merit than one who performs an Aśvamedha-yajña (horse sacrifice). One who observes Ekādaśī just once earns ten times more merit than a person who gives a thousand cows in charity to a *brāhmaṇa* learned in the Vedas.

"A person who feeds just one brahmacārī earns ten times more merit than one who feeds ten good *brāhmaṇas* in his own house. But a thousand times more merit than is earned by feeding a brahmacārī is achieved by donating land to the needy and respectable *brāhmaṇa*, and a thousand times more than that is earned by giving away a virgin girl in marriage to a young, well-educated, responsible man. Ten times more beneficial than this is educating children properly on the spiritual path, without expecting any reward in return. Ten times better than this, however, is giving food grains to the hungry. Indeed, giving charity to those in need is the best of all, and there never has been or ever will be a better charity than this. O son of Kuntī, all the forefathers and demigods in heaven become very satisfied when one gives food grains in charity. But the merit one obtains by observing a complete fast on Ekādaśī cannot be measured. O Arjuna, best of all Kurus, the powerful effect of this merit is inconceivable even to the demigods, and half this merit is attained by one who eats only supper on Ekādaśī.

"One should therefore observe fasting on Lord Hari's day either by eating only once at midday, abstaining from grains and beans; or by fasting completely. The processes of staying in places of pilgrimage, giving charity, and performing fire sacrifices may boast only as long as Ekādaśī has not arrived. Therefore anyone afraid of the miseries of material existence should observe Ekādaśī. On Ekādaśī one should not drink water from a conch-shell, kill living entities such as fish or pigs, or eat any grains or beans. Thus I have described to you, O Arjuna, the best of all methods of fasting, as you have inquired from Me.'

"Arjuna then asked, 'O Lord, according to You, a thousand Vedic sacrifices do not equal even one Ekādaśī fast. How can this be? How has Ekādaśī become the most meritorious of all days?'

"Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, 'I will tell you why Ekādaśī is the most purifying of all days. In the Satya-Yuga there once lived an amazingly fearsome demon called Mura. Always very angry, he terrified all the demigods, defeating even Indra, the king of heaven; Vivasvān, the sun-deity; the

eight Vasus; Lord Brahmā; Vāyu, the wind-deity; and Agni, the fire-deity. With his terrible power he brought them all under his control.

"Lord Indra then approached Lord Śiva and said, "We have all fallen from our planets and are now wandering helplessly on the earth. O lord, how can we find relief from this affliction? What will be the fate of us demigods?"

"Lord Śiva replied, "O best of the demigods, go to that place where Lord Viṣṇu, the rider of Garuḍa, resides. He is Jagannātha, the master of all the universes and their shelter as well. He is devoted to protecting all souls surrendered to Him."

"Lord Kṛṣṇa continued, 'O Arjuna, winner of wealth, after Lord Indra heard these words of Lord Śiva's, he proceeded with all the demigods to the place where Lord Jagannātha, the Lord of the universe, the protector of all souls, was resting. Seeing the Lord sleeping upon the water, the demigods joined their palms and, led by Indra, recite the following prayers:'"

"O Supreme Personality of God, all obeisances to You. O Lord of lords, O You who are praised by the foremost demigods, O enemy of all demons, O lotus-eyed Lord, O Madhusūdana (killer of the Madhu demon), please protect us. Afraid of the demon Mura, we demigods have come to take shelter of You. O Jagannātha, You are the doer of everything and the creator of everything. You are the mother and the father of all universes. You are the creator, the maintainer, and the destroyer of all. You are the supreme helper of all the demigods, and You alone can bring peace to them. you alone are the earth, the sky, and the universal benefactor.

""You are Śiva, Brahmā, and also Viṣṇu, the maintainer of the three worlds. You are the gods of the sun, moon, and fire. You are the clarified butter, the oblation, the sacred fire, the mantras, the rituals, the priests, and the silent chanting of japa. You are the sacrifice itself, its sponsor, and the enjoyer of its results, the Supreme Personality of God. Nothing within these three worlds, whether moveable or immovable, can exist independent of You. O Supreme Lord, Lord of lords, You are the protector of those who take shelter of You. O supreme mystic, O shelter of the fearful, please rescue and protect us. We demigods have been defeated by the demons and have thus fallen from the heavenly realm. Deprived of our positions, O Lord of the universe, we are now wandering about this earthly planet.""

"Lord Kṛṣṇa continued, 'Having heard Indra and the other demigods speak these words, Śrī Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of God, replied, "What demon possesses such great powers of delusion that he has been able to defeat all the demigods? What is his name, and where does he live? Where does he get his strength and shelter? Tell Me everything, O Indra, and do not fear."

"Lord Indra replied, "O Supreme God, O Lord of lords, O You who vanquish the fear in Your pure devotees' hearts, O You who are so kind to your faithful servants, there was once a powerful demon of the Brahman dynasty whose name was Nāḍijaṅgha. he was extraordinarily fearsome and wholly dedicated to destroying the demigods, and he begot an infamous son named Mura.

""Mura's great capital city is Candrāvati. From that base the terribly evil and powerful Mura demon has conquered the whole world and brought all the demigods under his control, driving

them out of their heavenly kingdom. He has assumed the roles of Indra, the king of heaven; Agni, the fire-deity; Yama, the lord of death; Vāyu, the wind-deity; Īśa, or Lord Śiva; Soma, the moon-deity; Nairṛti, the lord of the directions; and Pāśi, or Varuṇa, the water-deity. He has also begun emanating light in the role of the sun-deity and has turned himself into the clouds as well. It is impossible for the demigods to defeat him. O Lord Viṣṇu, please kill tis demon and make the demigods victorious."

"Hearing these words from Indra, Lord Janārdana became very angry and said,"O powerful demigods, all together you may now advance on Mura's capital city of Candrāvati." Encouraged thus, the assembled demigods proceeded to Candrāvati with Lord Hari leading the way.

"When Mura saw the demigods, that foremost of demons started roaring very loudly in the company of countless thousands of other demons, who were all holding brilliantly shining weapons. The mighty-armed demons struck the demigods, who began abandoning the battlefield and fleeing in the ten directions. Seeing the Supreme Lord Hṛṣīkeśa, the master of the senses, present on the battlefield, the furious demons rushed toward Him with various weapons in their hands. As they charged the Lord, who holds a sword, disk, and club, He immediately pierced all their limbs with His sharp, poisonous arrows. Thus many hundred of demons died by the Lord's hand.

"At last the chief demon, Mura, began fighting with the Lord. Mura used his mystic power to render useless whatever weapons the Supreme Lord Hṛṣīkeśa unleashed. Indeed, to the demon the weapons felt just like flowers striking him. When the Lord could not defeat the demon even with various kinds of weapons - whether those that are thrown or those that are held - He began fighting with His bare hands, which were as strong as iron-studded clubs. The Lord wrestled with Mura for one thousand celestial years and then, apparently fatigued, left for Badarikāśrama. There Lord Yogeśvara, the greatest of all yogis, the Lord of the universe, entered a very beautiful cave named Himāvati to rest. O Dhananjaya, winner of wealth, that cave was ninety-six miles in diameter and had only on entrance. I went there out of fear, and also to sleep. There is no doubt about this, O son of Pandu, for the great fight made me very tired. The demon followed Me into that cave and, seeing Me asleep, started thinking within his heart, "Today I will kill this slayer of all demons, Hari."

"While the wicked-minded Mura was making plans in this way, from My body there manifested a young girl who had a very bright complexion. O son of Pandu, Mura saw that she was equipped with various brilliant weapons and was ready to fight. Challenged by that female to do battle, Mura prepared himself and then fought with her, but he became very astonished when he saw that she fought him without cessation. The king of the demons then said, "Who has created this angry, fearsome girl who is fighting me so powerfully, just like a thunderbolt falling upon me?" After saying this, the demon continued to fight with the girl.

"Suddenly that effulgent goddess shattered all of Mura's weapons and in a moment deprived him of his chariot. He ran toward her to attacker with his bare hands, but when she saw him coming she angrily cut off his head. Thus the demon at once fell to the ground and went to the abode of Yamarāja. the rest of the Lord's enemies, out of fear and helplessness, entered the subterranean Patala region.

"Then the Supreme Lord woke up and saw the dead demon before Him, as well as the maiden bowing down to him with joined palms. His face expressing His astonishment, the Lord of the universe said, "Who has killed this vicious demon? He easily defeated all the demigods, Gandharvas, and even Indra himself, along with Indra's companions, the Maruts, and he also defeated the Nagas (snakes), the rulers of the lower planets. He even defeated Me, making Me hide in this cave out of fear. Who is it that has so mercifully protected Me after I ran from the battlefield and went to sleep in this cave?"

"The maiden said, "It is I who have killed this demon after appearing from Your transcendental body. Indeed, O Lord Hari, when he saw You sleeping he wanted to kill You. Understanding the intention of this thorn in the side of the three worlds, I killed the evil rascal and this freed all the demigods from fear. I am Your great maha-sakti, Your internal potency, who strikes fear into the hearts of all Your enemies. I have killed this universally terrifying demon to protect the three worlds. Please tell me why You are surprised to see that this demon has been killed, O Lord."

"The Supreme Personality of God said, "O sinless one, I am very satisfied to see that it is you who have killed this king of the demons. In this way you have made the demigods happy, prosperous, and full of bliss. Because you have given pleasure to all the demigods in the three worlds, I am very pleased with you. Ask any boon you may desire, O auspicious one. I will give it to you without a doubt, though it be very rare among the demigods."

"The maiden said, "O Lord, if You are pleased with me and wish to give me a boon, then give me the power to deliver from the greatest sins that person who fasts of this day. I wish that half the pious credit obtained by one who fasts will accrue to one who eats only in the evening (abstaining from grains and beans), and that half of this pious credit will be earned by one who eats only at midday. Also, may one who strictly observes a complete fast on my appearance day, with controlled senses, go to the abode of Lord Viṣṇu for one billion kalpas after he has enjoyed all kinds of pleasures in this world. This is the boon I desire to attain by Your mercy, my Lord, O Lord Janārdana, whether a person observes complete fasting, eats only in the evening, or eats only at midday, please grant him a religious attitude, wealth, and at last liberation."

"The Supreme Personality of God said, "O most auspicious lady, what you have requested is granted. All My devotees in this world will surely fast on your day, and thus they will become famous throughout the three worlds and finally come and stay with me in My abode. Because you, My transcendental potency, have appeared on the eleventh day of the waning moon, let your name be Ekādaśī. If a person fasts on Ekādaśī, I will burn up all his sins and bestow upon him My transcendental abode."

"These are the days of the waxing and waning moon that are most dear to Me: Tṛtīyā (the third day), Aṣṭamī (the eighth day), Navamī (the ninth day), Caturdaśī (the fourteenth day), and especially Ekādaśī (the eleventh day)."

"The merit one attains by fasting on Ekādaśī is greater than that achieved by observing any other kind of fast or by going to a place of pilgrimage, and even greater than that achieved by giving charity to *brāhmaṇas*. I tell you most emphatically that this is true."

"Having thus given the maiden His benediction, the Supreme Lord suddenly disappeared. From that time onward the Ekādaśī day became most meritorious and famous all over the universe. O Arjuna, if a person strictly observes Ekādaśī, I kill all his enemies and grant him the highest destination. Indeed, if a person observes this great Ekādaśī fast in any of the prescribed way, I remove all obstacles to his spiritual progress and grant him the perfection of life.

"Thus, O son of Pṛthā, I have described to you the origin of Ekādaśī. This one day removes all sins eternally. Indeed, it is the most meritorious day for destroying all kinds of sins, and it has appeared in order to benefit everyone in the universe by bestowing all varieties of perfection.

"One should not discriminate between the Ekādaśīs of the waxing and waning moons; both must be observed, O Pārtha, and they should not be differentiated from Mahā-Dvādaśī. Everyone who fasts of Ekādaśī should recognise that there is no difference between these two Ekādaśīs, for they comprise the same tithi.

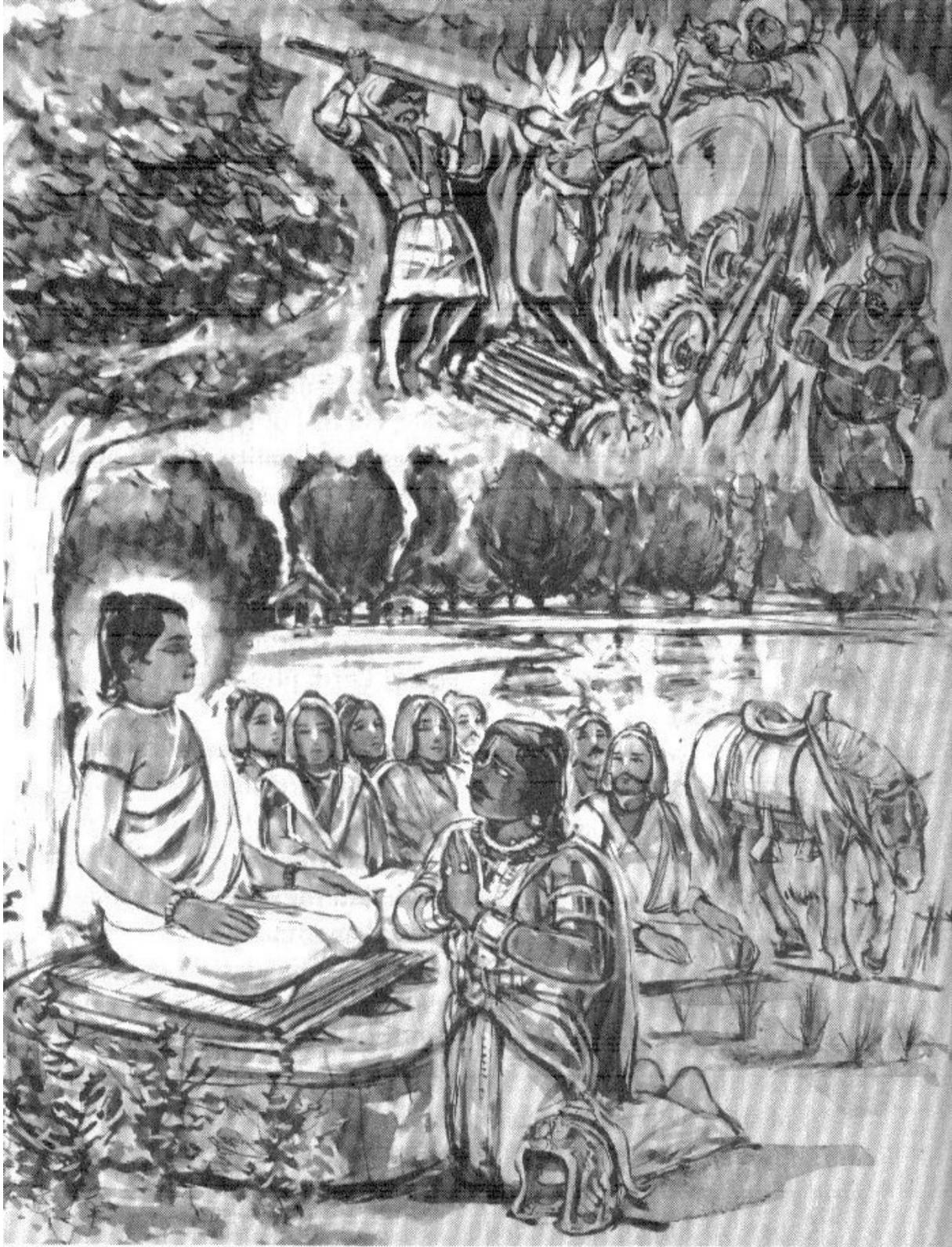
"Whoever completely fasts on Ekādaśī, following the rules and regulations, will achieve the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu, who rides upon Garuḍa. They are glorious who devote themselves to Lord Viṣṇu and spend all their rime studying the glories of Ekādaśī. One who vows not to eat anything on Ekādaśī but to eat only on the next day achieves the same merit as one who executes a horse sacrifice. Of this there is no doubt.

"On Dvādaśī, the day after Ekādaśī, one should pray, "O Puṇḍarīkākṣa, O lotus-eyed Lord, now I will eat. Please shelter me." After saying this, the wise devotee should offer some flowers and water at the Lord's lotus feet and invite the Lord to eat by chanting the eight-syllable mantra thrice. If the devotee wants to gain the fruit of his fast, he should then drink water taken from the sanctified vessel in which he offered water at the Lord's lotus feet.

"On Dvādaśī one must avoid sleeping during the day, eating in another's home, eating more than once, having sex, eating honey, eating from a bell-metal plate, eating urad-dal, and rubbing oil on one's body. The devotee must give up these eight things on Dvādaśī. If he wants to speak to an outcaste on that day, he must purify himself by eating a Tulasi leaf or an amalaki fruit. O best of kings, from noon on Ekādaśī until dawn on Dvādaśī, one should engage himself in taking baths, worshipping the Lord, and executing devotional activities, including the giving of charity and the performance of fire sacrifices. If one finds himself in difficult circumstances and cannot break the Ekādaśī fast properly on Dvādaśī, one can break it by drinking water, and then one is not at fault if he eats again after that.

"A devotee of Lord Viṣṇu who day and night hears these all-auspicious topics concerning the Lord from the mouth of another devotee will be elevated to the Lord's planet and reside there for ten million kalpas. And one who hears even one sentence about the glories of Ekādaśī is freed from the reactions to such sins as killing a *brāhmaṇa*. There is no doubt of this. For all eternity there will be no better way of worshiping Lord Viṣṇu than observing a fast on Ekādaśī."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Mārgaśirṣa-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī or Utpannā Ekādaśī, from the Bhaviṣya-uttara Purāṇa.*



*King Vaikhanasa approached Parvata Muni for instruction on how the king could free his father from the tortures of hell*

## Mokṣadā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Viṣṇu, master of all, O delight of the three worlds, O Lord of the entire Universe, O creator of the world, O oldest personality, O best of all beings, I offer my most respectful obeisances unto You.

"O Lord of lords, for the benefit of all living entities, kindly answer some questions that I have. What is the name of the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa (November-December) and removes all sins? How does one observe it properly, and which Deity is worshipped on that holiest of days? O my Lord please explain this to me in full."

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "O dear Yudhiṣṭhira, your enquiry is very auspicious in itself and will bring you fame. Just as I previously explained to you about the dearest Utpannā Mahā-Dvādaśī - which occurs during the dark part of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, which is the day when Ekādaśī-devi appeared from My body to kill the demon Mura, and which benefits everything animate and inanimate in the three worlds - so I shall now relate to you regarding this Ekādaśī that occurs during the light part of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. This Ekādaśī is famous as Mokṣadā because it purifies the faithful devotee of all sinful reactions and bestows liberation upon him. The worshippable Deity of this all auspicious day is Lord Dāmodara. With full attention one should worship Him with incense, a ghee lamp, fragrant flowers, and Tulasi manjaris (buds).

"O best of saintly kings, please listen as I narrate to you the ancient and auspicious history of this wonderful Ekādaśī. Simply by hearing this history one can attain the merit earned by performing a horse sacrifice. By the influence of this merit, one's forefathers, mothers, sons, and other relatives who have gone to hell can turn around and go to the heavenly kingdom. For this reason alone, O king, you should listen with rapt attention to this narration. "There once was a beautiful city named Campaka-nagara, which was decorated with devoted Vaiṣṇavas. There the best of saintly kings Mahārāja Vaikhānasa, ruled over his subjects as if they were his very own dear sons and daughters. The *brāhmaṇas* in that capital city were all expert in four kinds of Vedic knowledge. The king, while ruling properly, had a dream one night in which his father was seen to be suffering the pangs of hellish torture in one of the hellish planets ruled over by the Yamarāja. The king was overwhelmed with compassion for his father and shed tears. The next morning, Mahārāja Vaikhānasa described what he had seen in his dream to his council of twice born learned *brāhmaṇas*.

" ' O *brāhmaṇas*,' the king said, 'in a dream last night I saw my father suffering on a hellish planet. He was crying out in anguish, "O son, please deliver me from this torment of this hellish condition !" Now I have no peace in my mind, and even this beautiful kingdom has become unbearable to me. Not even my horses, elephants, and chariots and my vast wealth in my treasury that formerly brought so much pleasure, gives me no pleasure at all.

" 'Everything, O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, even my own wife and sons, have become a source of unhappiness since I beheld my father suffering the tortures of that hellish condition so. Where can I go, and what can I do, O *brāhmaṇas*, to alleviate this misery? My body is burning with fear and sorrow! Please tell me what kind of charity, what mode of fasting, what austerity, or what deep meditation, and in service upon which Deity I may have to perform to deliver my father

from that agony and bestow upon liberation upon my forefathers. O best among the *brāhmaṇas*, what is the use of one's being a powerful son if one's father must suffer on a hellish planet? Truly, such a son's life is utterly useless, to him and to his forefathers.

"The twice born *brāhmaṇas* replied, 'O king, in the mountainous forest not far from here is the ashram where a great saint Parvata Muni resides. Please go to him, for he knows the past, the present, and the future of everything and can surely help you in your gaining relief from your misery.'

"Upon hearing this advise, the distressed king immediately set out on a journey to the ashram of the famous sage Parvata Muni. The ashram was indeed very big and housed many learned sages expert in chanting the sacred hymns of the four Vedas. Approaching the holy ashram, the king beheld Parvata Muni seated among the assembly of sages like another Lord Brahmā.

"Mahārāja Vaikhānasa offered his humble obeisances to the muni, bowing his head and then prostrating his entire body before him. After the king had seated himself among the assembly Parvata Muni asked him about the welfare of the seven limbs of his extensive kingdom. The muni also asked him if his kingdom was free of troubles and whether everyone was peaceful, happy and satisfied. To these enquiries the king replied, 'By your mercy O glorious and great sage, all seven limbs of my kingdom are doing very well. Yet there is a problem that has recently arisen and to solve it I have come to you, O *brāhmaṇa* for your expert help and guidance'.

"Then Parvata Muni, the best of all sages, closed his eyes and meditated on the king's past, present and future. After a few moments he opened his eyes and said, 'Your father is suffering the results of committing a great sin and I have discovered what it is. In his previous life he quarrelled with his wife and forcibly enjoyed her sexually during her menstrual period. She tried to protest and resist his advances and even yelled out, "Someone please save me! Please, O husband, do not interrupt my monthly period in this way!" Still he did not stop or leave her alone. It is on account of this grievous sin that your father now has fallen into such a hellish condition of suffering.'

"King Vaikhānasa then said, 'O greatest among sages, by what process of fasting or charity may I liberate my dear father from such a condition? Please tell me how I can relieve and remove the burden of his sinful reactions, which are a great obstacle to his progress toward ultimate liberation.'

"Parvata Muni replied, 'During the light fortnight of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa there occurs an Ekādaśī called Mokṣadā. If you observe this sacred Ekādaśī strictly, with a full fast, and give directly to your suffering father the merit you thus attain/obtain, he will be freed from his pain and instantly liberated'.

"Hearing this, Mahārāja Vaikhānasa profusely thanked the great sage and then returned to his palace. O Yudhiṣṭhira, when the light part of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa at last arrived, Mahārāja Vaikhānasa faithfully waited for the Ekādaśī tithi to arrive. He then perfectly and with full faith observed the Ekādaśī fast with his wife, children, and other relatives. He dutifully gave the merit from this fast to his father, and as he made the offering, beautiful flower petals showered down

from the devas who peered out from behind the clouds in the sky. The king's father was then praised by the messengers of the demigods (devas) and escorted to the celestial region. As he passed his son, as he traversed the lower to middle to higher planets, the father said to the king, 'My dear son, all auspiciousness unto you!' At last he reached the heavenly realm.

"O son of Pandu, who so ever strictly observes the sacred Mokṣadā Ekādaśī, following the established rules and regulations, achieves full and perfect liberation after death. There is no better fasting day than this Ekādaśī of the light fortnight of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, O Yudhiṣṭhira, for it is a crystal-clear and sinless day. Whoever faithfully observes this Ekādaśī fast, which is like cintā-mani (a gem that yields all desires), obtains special merit that is very hard to calculate, for this day can elevate one from hellish life to the heavenly planets, and for one who observes Ekādaśī for his own spiritual benefit, this elevates one to go back to God, never to return to this material world."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Mārgaśīrṣa-shukla Ekādaśī or Mokṣada Ekādaśī, from the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

The four Vedas are Rg, Yajur, Sama and Arthava

The seven limbs of a king's domain are the king himself, his ministers, his treasury, his military forces, his allies, the *brāhmaṇas*, the sacrificial offerings performed and the needs of his subjects

Mokshada Ekādaśī is a special Ekādaśī in two regards; It was the auspicious day on which Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, at the place now known as Jyotisar Tirtha.

Anyone who gifts a Bhagavad Gītā away to a deserving person on this day is bestowed profuse blessings by the Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān.



*A beautiful horse stood beside Lumpaka, ready to take him back to the city of Campavati*

## Saphalā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, “O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, what is the name of that Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Pauṣa (December-January)? How is it observed, and which Deity is to be worshipped on that day? Please narrate these details to me fully, so that I may understand O Janārdana.”

The Supreme Personality of God Śrī Kṛṣṇa then replied, “O best of kings, because you desire to hear, I shall fully describe to you the glories of the Pauṣa-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī.

“I do not become as pleased by sacrifice or charity as I do by My devotee's observance of a full fast on Ekādaśī. To the best of one's ability, therefore, one should fast on Ekādaśī, the day of Lord Hari.

“O Yudhiṣṭhira, I urge you to hear with undivided intelligence the glories of Pauṣa-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, which falls on a Dvādaśī. As I explained previously, one should not differentiate among the many Ekādaśīs. O king, to benefit humanity at large I shall now describe to you the process of observing Pauṣa-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī.

“Pauṣa-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī is also known as Saphalā Ekādaśī. On this sacred day one should worship Lord Nārāyaṇa, for He is its ruling Deity. One should do so by follow the previously described method of fasting. Just as among snakes Śeṣa-nāga is the best, and among birds Garuḍa is the best, among sacrifices the Aśvamedha-yajña is the best, among rivers Mother Gangā is the best, among gods Lord Viṣṇu is best, and among two-legged beings the *brāhmaṇas* are the best, so among all fasting days Ekādaśī is by far the best. O foremost of kings who took your birth in the Bharata dynasty, whoever strictly observes Ekādaśī becomes very dear to Me and indeed worshipable by Me in every way. Now listen as I describe the process for observing Saphalā Ekādaśī.

“On Saphalā Ekādaśī My devotee should worship Me by offering Me fresh fruits according to time, place and circumstance, and by meditating on Me as the all-auspicious Supreme Personality of God. He should offer Me *jāmbīra* fruit, pomegranate, betel, coconut, guava, varieties of nuts, cloves, mangoes, and different kinds of aromatic spices. He should also offer Me incense and bright ghee lamps, for such an offering of lamps on Saphalā Ekādaśī is especially glorious. The devotee should try to stay awake all night.

“Now please hear with undivided attention as I tell you how much merit one gets if he fasts and remains awake throughout the entire night singing and chanting the glories of Nārāyaṇa. O best of kings, there is no sacrifice or pilgrimage that yields merit that is equal to or better than the merit one gains by fasting on this Saphalā Ekādaśī. Such fasting – particularly if one can remain awake and alert the entire night long – bestows the same merit upon the faithful devotee as the performance of austerity for five thousand earthly years. O lion among kings, please hear the glorious history of this Ekādaśī.

“Once there was a city called Campāvati, which was ruled by the saintly King Māhiṣmata. He had four sons, the eldest of whom, Lumpaka, always engaged in very sinful activities – illicit sex with the wives of others, gambling, and continual association with known prostitutes. His evil deeds gradually reduced the wealth of his father, King Māhiṣmata. Lumpaka also became very critical of the demi-gods, and the *brāhmaṇas*, and every day he would go out of his way to blaspheme the Vaiṣṇavas. At last King Māhiṣmata, condition of his son, exiled him to the forest. Out of fear of the king, even compassionate relatives did not come to Lumpaka’s defense, so angry was the king, and so sinful was this Lumpaka.

“Bewildered in his exile, Lumpaka thought to himself, ‘My father has sent me away, and even my kinsmen do not raise any objection. What should I do now?’ He schemed sinfully and thought, ‘I shall sneak back to the city under cover of darkness and plunder its wealth. During the day I shall stay in the forest, and at night, I’ll return to the city.’ So thinking, Lumpaka entered the dark forest. He killed many animals by day, and by night he stole valuable items from the city. The city-dwellers apprehended him several times, but out of fear of the king they left him alone. They thought to themselves that it must have been the sins of his previous births that had made him lose his royal facilities and act so sinfully.

“Though a meat-eater, Lumpaka would also eat fruits every day. He resided under an old banyan tree that happened to be very dear to Lord Vāsudeva. Indeed, many worshipped it as the demi-god of all the trees in the forest. In due course of time, while Lumpaka was doing so many sinful and condemnable activities, the Saphalā Ekādaśī arrived. On the eve of the Ekādaśī (Daśamī) Lumpaka had to pass the entire night without sleep because of the severe cold and his scanty bedclothes. The cold not only robbed him of all peace but almost killed him. By the time the sun rose, his teeth chattering and he was almost comatose and during the morning of that day, Ekādaśī, he could not awaken from his stupor.

“When midday of the Saphalā Ekādaśī arrived, the sinful Lumpaka finally came to and managed to rise up from his place under that banyan tree. But with every step he took, he stumbled to the ground. Like a lame man, he walked slowly and hesitantly, suffering greatly from hunger and thirst in the midst of the jungle. So weak was Lumpaka that he could not kill even a single animal that day. Instead, he was reduced to collecting whatever fruits had fallen to the ground. By the time he returned to the banyan tree, the sun had set.

“Placing the fruits on the ground next to him, Lumpaka began to cry out, ‘O, woe is me ! What should I do? Dear father, what is to become of me? O Śrī Hari, please be merciful to me and accept these fruits as an offering!’ Again he was forced to lie awake the whole night without sleep, but in the meantime the Supreme Personality of God, Madhusūdāna, had become pleased with Lumpaka’s offering of forest fruits, and He accepted them. Lumpaka had unwittingly observed a full Ekādaśī fast, and by the merit he reaped on that day he regained his kingdom with no further obstacles.

“Listen, O Yudhiṣṭhira, to what happened to the son of King Māhiṣmata when but a fragment of the merit spouted up within his heart.

“As the sun beautifully rose in the sky on the day following Ekādaśī, a handsome horse approached Lumpaka, and stood next to him. At the same time, a voice suddenly boomed out from the clear blue sky, ‘This horse is for you, Lumpaka! Mount it and ride swiftly out of this forest to greet you family! O son of King Māhiṣmata, by the mercy of Lord Vāsudeva and the strength of the merit you acquired by observing Saphalā Ekādaśī, your kingdom will be returned to you without any further hindrances. Such is the benefit you have gained by fasting on this most auspicious of days. Go now, to you father and enjoy your rightful place in the dynasty.’

“Upon hearing these celestial words resounding from above, Lumpaka mounted the horse and rode back to the city of Campāvati. By the merit he had accrued by fasting on Saphalā Ekādaśī, he had become a handsome prince once more and was able to absorb his mind in the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of God, Hari. In other words, he had become My pure devotee.

“Lumpaka offered his father, King Māhiṣmata, his humble obeisances and once more accepted his princely responsibilities. Seeing his son so decorated with Vaiṣṇava ornaments and tilak King Māhiṣmata gave him the kingdom, and Lumpaka ruled unopposed for many, many years. Whenever the Ekādaśī came, he worshipped the Supreme Lord with great devotion. And by the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa he obtained a beautiful wife and a fine son. In old age Lumpaka handed his kingdom over to his son – just as his own father, King Māhiṣmata, had handed it over to him-and went to the forest to serve the Supreme Lord with controlled mind and senses. Purified of all material desires, he left his body and returned back to home, back to God, attaining a place near the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

“O Yudhiṣṭhira, one who approaches Me as Lumpaka did will become completely free of lamentation and anxiety. Indeed, anyone who properly observes this glorious Saphalā Ekādaśī – even unknowingly, like Lumpaka – will become famous in this world. He will become perfectly liberated at death and return to Vaikuṅṭha. Of this there is no doubt. Moreover, one who simply hears the glories of Saphalā Ekādaśī obtains the same merit derived by one who performs a Rājasūrya-yajña, and at the very least he goes to heaven in his next birth.”

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Pauṣa-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, or Saphalā Ekādaśī, from the Bhaviṣya-uttara Purāṇa.*



*King Suetuman dismounted his horse and saw that the sages by the beautiful pond were chanting the names of God on japa beads*

## Putradā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, “O Lord, You have so nicely explained to us the wonderful glories of the Saphalā Ekādaśī, which occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Pauṣa (December – January). Now please be merciful to me and explain to me the details of the Ekādaśī that occurs in the light fortnight (Shukla or Gaura paksha) of this month. What is its name, and what Deity is to be worshipped on that sacred day? O Puruṣottama, O Hṛṣīkeśa, please also tell me how You can be pleased on this day?”

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa then replied, “O saintly king, for the benefit of all humanity I shall now tell you how to observe fasting on the Pauṣa-śukla Ekādaśī.

As previously explained, everyone should observe the rules and regulations of the Ekādaśī vrata, to the very best of their ability. This injunction also applies to the Ekādaśī named Putradā, which destroys all sins and elevates one to the spiritual abode. The Supreme Personality of God Śrī Nārāyaṇa, the original personality, is the worshipable Deity of the Ekādaśī and for His faithful devotees He happily fulfils all desires and awards full perfection. Thus among all the animate and inanimate beings in the three worlds (lower, middle and higher planetary systems), there is no better personality than Lord Nārāyaṇa.

“O King, now I shall narrate to you the history of Putradā Ekādaśī, which removes all kinds of sins and makes one famous and learned.

“There was once a kingdom named Bhadrāvati, which was ruled by King Suketumān. His queen was the famous Śaibyā. Because he had no son, he spent a long time in anxiety, thinking, ‘If I have no son, who will carry on my dynasty?’ In this way the king meditated in a religious attitude for a very long time, thinking, ‘Where should I go? What should I do? How can I get a son? King Suketumān could find no happiness anywhere in his kingdom, even in his own palace, and soon he was spending more and more time inside his wife’s palace, gloomily thinking only of how he could get a son.

“Thus both King Suketumān and Queen Śaibyā were in great distress. Even when they offered tarpaṇa (oblations of water to their forefathers), their mutual misery made them think that it was as undrinkable as boiling water. They thus thought that they would have no descendents to offer tarpaṇa to them when they died. The king and queen were especially upset to learn that their forefathers were worried that soon there would be no one to offer them tarpaṇa.

“After learning of their forefather’s unhappiness, the king and queen became more and more miserable, and neither ministers, nor friends, nor even loved ones could cheer them up. To the king, his elephants and horses and infantry were no solace, and at last he became practically inert and helpless.

“The king thought, ‘It is said that without a son, marriage is wasted. Indeed, for a family man with no son, both his heart and his splendid house remain vacant and miserable. Bereft of a son, a man cannot liquidate the debts that he owes his forefathers, the demigods and to other human beings. Therefore every married man should endeavor to beget a son; thus he will become

famous within this world and at last attain the auspicious celestial realms. A son is proof of the pious activities a man performed in his past one hundred lifetimes, and such a person achieves a long duration of life in this world, along with good health and great wealth. Possessing sons and grandsons in this lifetime proves that one has worshipped Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of God, in the past. The great blessing of sons, wealth, and sharp intelligence can be achieved only by worshipping the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is my opinion.’

“Thinking thus, the king had no peace. He remained in anxiety day and night, from morning to evening, and from the time he lay down to sleep at night until the sun rose in the morning, his dreams were equally full of great anxiety. Suffering such constant anxiety and apprehension, King Suketumān decided to end his misery by committing suicide. But he realized that suicide throws a person into hellish conditions of rebirth, and so he abandoned that idea. Seeing that he was gradually destroying himself by his all consuming anxiety over the lack of a son, the king at last mounted his horse and left for the dense forest alone. No one, not even the priests and *brāhmaṇas* of the palace, knew where he had gone.

“In that forest, which was filled with deer and birds and other animals, King Suketumān wandered aimlessly, noting all the different kinds of trees and shrubs, such as the fig, bel fruit, date palm, jackfruit, *bakula*, *saptaparṇā*, *tinduka*, and *tilaka*, as well as the *śala*, *tāla*, *tamāla*, *saralā*, *hiṅgoṭā*, *arjuna*, *labherā*, *baheḍā*, *sallaki*, *karondā*, *paṭala*, *khaira*, *śāka*, and *palāśa* trees. All were beautifully decorated with fruits and flowers. He saw deer, tigers, wild boar, lions, monkeys, snakes, huge bull elephants in a rut, cow elephants with their calves, and four-tusked elephants with their mates close by. There were cows, jackals, rabbits, leopards, and hippopotamuses. Beholding all these animals accompanied by their mates and offspring, the king remembered his own menagerie, especially his palace elephants, and became so sad that he absentmindedly wandered into their very midst.

“Suddenly the king heard a jackal howl in the distance. Startled, he began wandering about, looking around in all directions. Soon it was midday, and the king started to tire. He was tormented by hunger and thirst also. He thought, ‘What sinful deed could possibly have done so that I am now forced to suffer like this, with my throat parched and burning, and my stomach empty and rumbling? I have pleased the devas (demigods) with numerous fire sacrifices and abundant devotional worship. I have given many gifts and delicious sweets in charity to all the worthy *brāhmaṇas* too. And I have taken care of my subjects as though they were my very own children. Why then am I suffering so? What unknown sins have come to bear fruit and torment me in this dreadful way?’

“Absorbed in these thoughts, King Suketumān struggled forward, and eventually, due to his pious credits, he came upon a beautiful lotus bearing pond that resembled the famous Lake Mānasarovara. It was filled with aquatics, including crocodiles and many varieties of fish, and graced with varieties of lilies and lotuses. The beautiful lotuses had opened to the sun, and swans, cranes and ducks swam happily in its waters. Nearby were many attractive āśramas, where there resided many saints and sages who could fulfill the desires of anyone. Indeed, they wished everyone well. When the king saw all this, his right arm and right eye began to quiver, a sign that something auspicious was about to happen.

“As the king dismounted his horse and stood before the sages, who sat on the shore of the pond, he saw that they were chanting the holy names of God on japa beads. The king paid his obeisances and, joining his palms, addressed them with glorified praises. Observing the respect the king offered them, the sages said, ‘We are very pleased with you, O king. Kindly tell us why you have come here. What is on your mind? Please tell us what you desire.’

“The king replied, ‘O great sages, who are you? What are your names, O auspicious saints? Why have you come to this beautiful place? Please tell me everything.’

“The sages replied, ‘O king, we are known as the ten Viśvedevas. We have come here to this very lovely pond to bathe. The month of Māgha will soon be here in five days and today is the famous Putradā Ekādaśī. One who desires a son should strictly observe this particular Ekādaśī.’

“The king said, ‘I have tried so hard to have a son. If you great sages are pleased with me, kindly grant the boon of having a good son (putra).’

“ ‘The very meaning of Putradā,’ the sages replied, ‘is “giver of a son.” So please observe a complete fast on this Ekādaśī day. If you do so, then by our blessing – and by the mercy of Lord Keśava – you will surely obtain a son.’

“On the advice of the Viśvedevas, the king observed the auspicious fast day of Putradā Ekādaśī according to the established rules and regulations, and on the Dvādaśī, after breaking his fast, he paid obeisances again and again to all of them.

“Soon after Suketumān returned to his palace and united with his queen. Queen Śaibyā immediately became pregnant, and exactly as the Viśvedevas had predicted, a bright faced, beautiful son was born to them. In due course of time he became famous as an heroic prince, and the king gladly pleased his noble son by making him his successor. The son of Suketumān took care of his subjects very conscientiously, just as if they were his own children.

“In conclusion, O Yudhiṣṭhira, one who wishes to fulfill his desires should strictly observe Putradā Ekādaśī. While on this planet, one who strictly observes this Ekādaśī will surely obtain a son, and after death he will achieve liberation. Anyone who even reads or hears the glories of Putradā Ekādaśī obtains the merit earned by performing an horse sacrifice. It is to benefit all humanity that I have explained all this to you.”

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Pauṣa-shukla Ekādaśī, or Putradā Ekādaśī, from the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa of Veda Vyāsadeva.*

#### Notes

The ten Viśvedevas, the sons of Vishva; Vasu, Satya, Kratu, Daksha, Kāla, Kāma, Dhriti, Pururavā, Mādrava, and Kuru)



*Lord Visnu, disguised as a follower of Lord Siva, approached the old woman for alms-but she threw a dense lump of mud into His begging bowl*

## Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī

**D**ālbhya Ṛṣi said to Palastya Muni, "When the spirit soul comes in contact with the material energy, he immediately begins to perform sinful activities, such as stealing, killing, and illicit sex. He may even perform many other terrible deeds, such as killing a *brāhmaṇa*. O purest of personalities, please tell me how these unfortunate souls may escape the punishment of being sent to hellish regions of creation. Kindly inform me how, by giving even a little in charity, one may be easily released from the reactions of his sins."

Pulastya Muni replied, "O fortunate one, you have asked me an important and confidential question, which not even Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva or Indra has ever asked. Please listen very carefully to my answer.

"With the arrival of the month of Māgh (January - February), one should bathe, carefully control his senses by giving up lust, anger, pride, jealousy, faultfinding, and greed, and meditate on the Supreme Personality of God Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. One should then gather up some cow dung before it touches the ground and, after mixing it with sesame seeds and cotton, form 108 balls. This should be done on the day when the constellation of Purvāṣādhā-nakṣatra arrives. then one should follow the rules and regulations of Śrī Ekādaśī, which I shall now explain to you.

"After bathing, the person who intends to observe Ekādaśī should worship the Supreme Lord. While praying to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa by chanting His holy name, he should promise to observe the Ekādaśī fast. He should remain awake overnight and perform a homa (fire sacrifice). Then the devotee should perform an *āratī* ceremony for the pleasure of the Lord - who holds a conch, disk, club and so on in His hands - offering Him sandalwood paste to his feet, incense, camphor, a bright ghee lamp, and delicious food preparations. Next the devotee should offer the 108 balls of cow dung, sesame seeds, and cotton wool into the sacred fire whilst chanting such holy names of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. Throughout the whole day and night he should also observe the standard Ekādaśī fast, which in this case is a fast from all kinds of grains and beans. On this occasion one should offer the Lord - pumpkin, coconut, and guava. If these items are unavailable, betel nut may be substituted.

"The devotee should pray to Lord Śrī Janārdana, the benefactor of all living beings, in this way; 'O Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, You are the most merciful Personality of God and the giver of liberation to all fallen souls. O Lord, we have fallen into the ocean of material existence. Please be kind to us. O lotus-eyed divinity, please accept our most humble, affectionate and respectful obeisances. O protector of the entire world, we offer You our humble respects again and again. O Supreme Spirit, O Supreme One, O source of all our forefathers, may You and Your eternal consort, Śrīmatī Lakṣmī-devī, please accept these humble offerings.'

"The devotee should then try to please a qualified *brāhmaṇa* with a warm welcome, a pot full of water, an umbrella, a pair of shoes, and clothes, requesting him at the same time to bestow his blessings, by which one may develop unalloyed love for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. According to one's ability, one may also donate a black cow to such a *brāhmaṇa*, particularly to one who is very

well versed in all the injunctions of the Vedic scriptures. One should also offer him a pot full of sesame seeds.

"O exalted Dālbhya Muni, black sesame seeds are especially suitable for formal worship and fire sacrifices while white or brown ones are meant to be eaten by a qualified *brāhmaṇa*. One who can arrange to give both kinds of sesame seeds (black and white or brown) especially on this Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī day will be promoted to at least the heavenly planets after leaving this present body, for as many thousands of years as the number of seeds that would be produced if the seeds he donated were sown in the ground and grew into mature, seed bearing plants.

"On this Ekādaśī a faithful person should bathe in the water mixed with sesame seeds, rub sesame seed paste on his body, offer sesame seeds into the fire in sacrifice, eat sesame seeds, give sesame seeds away in charity, accept charitable gifts of sesame seeds. These are the six (ṣaṭ) ways in which sesame seeds (tilā) are utilised for spiritual purification on this Ekādaśī. Therefore it is called Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī.

"The great Devarṣi Nāradaḥ once asked the Supreme Personality of God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'O mighty armed Lord, O You who are so affectionate to Your loving devotees, please accept my most humble obeisances. O Yādava, kindly tell me the result one obtains by observing Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī.'

"Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, 'O best of the twice born, I shall narrate to you an account of an incident I personally witnessed. Long ago on earth there lived an old female brāhmaṇī who worshipped Me every day with controlled senses. She very faithfully observed many a fast, especially on special days honouring Me and served Me with full devotion, devoid of any personal motive. Her rigorous fasting made her quite weak and thin. She gave charity to *brāhmaṇas* and to young maidens, and even planned to give away her house in charity. O best of the *brāhmaṇas* although this spiritually minded woman gave charitable donations to worthy people, the odd feature of her austerity was that she never gave food to *brāhmaṇas* or the demigods.

"I began to reflect on this curious omission: "This fine woman has purified herself by fasting on all the auspicious occasions and by offering Me strict devotional worship. Therefore she certainly has become eligible to enter My personal abode, which is unattainable by ordinary persons." So I came down to this planet to examine her, disguising Myself as a follower of Lord Śiva's, complete with a garland of skulls draped around My neck and a begging pot in My hand.

"As I approached her, she said to Me, "O respectful one, tell me truthfully why You have come before me."

"I replied, "O beautiful one, I have come to get some sacred alms from you" - whereupon she angrily threw a dense lump of mud into My begging pot! O Nārada Muni I simply turned around and went back to My personal abode, astonished at this fine brāhmaṇī's peculiar mixture of great magnanimity and stinginess.

"At last this austere lady reached the spiritual world in her self-same body, so great were her efforts at fasting and charity. And because she had indeed offered Me a lump of mud, I

transformed that mud into a beautiful home. However, O Nāradaĵi, this particular house was just like that mud completely devoid of any edible grains, as well as any furniture or ornamentation, and when she entered it she found only an empty structure. She therefore approached Me and said with great anger, "I have fasted repeatedly on so many auspicious occasions, making my body weak and thin. I have worshipped You and prayed to You in so many different ways for You are truly the master and protector of all the universes. Yet despite all this there is no food or wealth to be seen in my new home, O Janārdana, please tell me. Why is this?"

"I replied, "Please return to your house. Sometime later the wives of the demigods will pay you a visit out of curiosity to see the new arrival, but do not open your door until they have described to you the glories and importance of Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī."

"Hearing this, she returned to her house. Eventually the demigods' wives arrived there and in unison said, "O beautiful one, we have come to have your darśana. O auspicious one, please open the door to your house and let us see you.

"The lady replied, "O most dear ones, if you want me to open this door, you will have to describe to me the merit one obtains by observing the sacred fast of Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī." But to this request, not even one of the wives responded.

"Later, however, they returned to the house, and one of the wives nicely explained the sublime nature of this sacred Ekādaśī. And when the lady at last opened her door, they saw that she was neither a demigoddess, a Gandharvī, a she-demon, nor even a Nāga-patnī. She was simply an ordinary human lady.

"From then on the lady observed Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī, which awards material enjoyment and liberation at the same time, as it has been described to her. And she finally received the beautiful furnishings and grains she had expected for her home. Moreover, her once ordinary material body was transformed into a beautiful spiritual form with a fine complexion. So, by the mercy and grace of Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī, both the lady and her new home in the spiritual world were at last radiantly splendid and lustrous with gold, silver, jewels and diamonds.

"O Nāradaĵi, a person should not ostentatiously observe Ekādaśī out of greed, with the hope of attaining wealth dishonestly. Selflessly, he should simply donate sesame seed, clothes and food according to his capacity, for by doing so he will achieve good health and exalted spiritual consciousness, birth after birth. Ultimately, he will be given release from the bonds of this world (liberation) and admittance into the Lord's supreme abode will be his to enjoy. That is my opinion, O best of the demigods.'

"O Dālbhya Muni," Pulastya Ṛṣi concluded, "one who properly observes this wonderful Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī with great faith become free from all kinds of poverty - spiritual, mental, physical, social, and intellectual - as well as all kinds of ill luck and evil omens. Indeed, following this Ekādaśī fast by donating, sacrificing, or eating sesame seeds frees one of all past sin, without a doubt. One need not wonder how this happens. The rare soul who properly performs these acts of charity in the right devotional mood, following the Vedic injunctions, will become utterly free of all sinful reactions and go back to God, back home to the spiritual world."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Magh-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, or Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī, from the Bhaviṣya-uttara Purāṇa.*



*Lord Indra shouted, "You useless fools, I curse you to fall to the earth and suffer as hobgoblins!"*

## Jayā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Lord of the lords, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all glories unto You! O Master of the universe, You alone are the source of the four types of living entities those born from eggs, those born from perspiration, those born from seeds and those born from embryos. You alone are the root cause of all, O Lord, and therefore You are the creator, maintainer and destroyer.

"My Lord, You have so kindly explained to me the auspicious day known as Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī, which occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Māgha (January - February). Now please explain to me the Ekādaśī that occurs in the light fortnight of this month. By what name is it known, and what is the process for observing it? Who is the presiding Deity that is to be worshipped on this sublime day, which is so very dear to You?

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "O Yudhiṣṭhira, I shall gladly tell you about the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light half of this month of Māgha. This Ekādaśī obliterates all kinds of sinful reactions and demoniac influences that may be affecting the spirit soul. It is known as Jayā Ekādaśī, and the fortunate soul who observes a fast on this sacred day is relieved of the great burden of ghostly existence. Thus there is no better Ekādaśī than this, for it truly bestows freedom from birth and death. It is to be honoured very carefully and diligently. So you to listen to Me very attentively, O Pāṇḍava, as I explain a wonderful historic episode regarding this Ekādaśī, an episode that I have already related in the Padma Purāṇa.

"Long, long ago in the heavenly planets, Lord Indra ruled his celestial kingdom very nicely, and all the demigods living there were very happy and content. In Nandana Forest, which was beautifully graced with *pārijāta* flowers, Indra drank ambrosia whenever he liked and enjoyed the service of fifty million celestial maidens, the Apsarās, who danced in ecstasy for his pleasure.

"Many singers, led by Puṣpadanta, sang in sweet voices beyond compare. Chitrasena, Indra's chief musician was there in the company of his wife Mālinī and his handsome son Mālyavān. An Apsarā named Puṣpavatī became very much attracted to Mālyavān; indeed Cupid's sharp arrows pierced the core of her heart. Her beautiful body and complexion, along with the enchanting movements of her eyebrows, captivated Mālayavān.

"O King, listen as I describe the splendid beauty of Puṣpavatī: She has incomparably graceful arms with which to embrace a man like a fine silken noose; her face resembles the Moon; her lotus eyes reached almost to her lovely ears, which were adorned with wonderful and costly earrings; her thin, ornamented neck looked like a conch, having three lines; her waist was very slender, the size of a fist; her hips were broad, and her thighs like the trunks of banana trees; her naturally beautiful features were complemented by gorgeous ornaments and garments; her breasts were highly raised emphasizing her prime of youth; and to look upon her feet was to behold newly grown red lotuses.

"Seeing Puṣpavatī in all her heavenly beauty, Mālyavān was bewitched at once. They had come with the other performers to please Lord Indra by singing and dancing enchantingly, but because they had become so enamored of each other, pierced through the heart by the arrows of Cupid,

lust personified, they were utterly unable to sing or dance properly before the lord and master of the heavenly realms. Their pronunciation was wrong and their rhythm careless. Lord Indra understood the source of the errors at once. Offended at the discord in the musical performance, he became very angry and screamed, "You useless fools! You pretend to sing for me while in a stupor of infatuation with each other! You are mocking me! I curse you both to suffer henceforth as *piśācas* (hobgoblins). As husband and wife, go to the earthly regions and reap the reactions of your offenses.'

"Struck dumb by these harsh words, Mālyavān and Puṣpavatī at once became morose and fell from the beautiful Nandana Forest in the kingdom of heaven to a Himalayan peak here on planet Earth.

Immeasurably distressed, and their celestial intelligence vastly diminished by the effects of lord Indra's fierce curse, they lost their sense of taste and smell, and even their sense of touch. It was so cold and miserable high on the Himalayan wastes of snow and ice that they could not even enjoy the oblivion of sleep.

"Roaming aimlessly hither and thither in those harsh altitudes, Mālyavān and Puṣpavatī suffered more and more, from one moment to the next. Even though they were situated in a cave, because of the snowfall and cold their teeth chattered ceaselessly, and their hair stood on end because of their fright and bewilderment.

"In this utterly desperate situation, Mālyavān said to Puṣpavatī, 'What abominable sins did we commit to have to suffer in these *piśāca* bodies, in this impossible environment? This is absolutely hellish! Though hell is very ferocious, the suffering we are undergoing here is even more abominable. Therefore it is abundantly clear that one should never commit any sin'.

"And so the forlorn lovers trudged onward in the snow and ice. By their great good fortune, however, it so happened that very day was the all auspicious Jayā Ekādaśī, the Ekādaśī of the light fortnight of the month of Māgha. Because of their misery they neglected to drink any water, kill any game, or even eat whatever fruits and leaves were available at that altitude, they unknowingly observed Ekādaśī by fasting completely from all food and drink. Sunk in misery Mālyavān and Puṣpavatī collapsed beneath a *pipal* (banyan) tree and did not even try to get up. The sun had set by that time.

"The night was even colder and more miserable than the day. They shivered in the frigid snowfall as their teeth chattered in unison, and when they became numb, they embraced just to keep warm. Locked in each other's arms, they could enjoy neither sleep nor sex. Thus they suffered through the whole night under the powerful curse of the deva Indra.

"Still, O Yudhiṣṭhira, by the mercy of the fast they had by chance (unknowingly) observed on Jayā Ekādaśī, and because they had remained awake all night, they were blessed.

Please hear what happened on the next day. As Dvādaśī dawned, Mālyavān and Puṣpavatī had given up their demoniac forms and were once again beautiful heavenly beings wearing lustrous ornaments and exquisite garments. As they both looked at each other in amazement, a celestial

airplane (*vimāna*) arrived on the spot for them. A chorus of heavenly denizens sang their praises as the reformed couple stepped into the beautiful aircraft and proceeded directly to the heavenly regions, buoyed up by the good wishes of everyone. Soon Mālyavān and Puṣpavatī arrived at Amarāvātī, Lord Indra's capital city, and then they immediately went before their lord and offered him their cheerful obeisances.

"Lord Indra was astonished to see that they had been transformed, restored to their original status and forms so soon after he had cursed them to suffer as demons far, far below his celestial kingdom. Indra asked them, 'What extraordinary meritorious deeds have you performed so that you could give up your *piśāca* bodies so quickly after I cursed you? Who released you from my irresistible curse?'"

"Mālyavān replied, 'O lord, it was by the extreme mercy of the Supreme Personality of God, Lord Vāsudeva and also by the powerful influence of the Jayā Ekādaśī, that we were released from our suffering condition as *piśācas*. This is the truth, O master: Because we executed devotional service to Lord Viṣṇu by observing the day most dear to Him, we have happily been restored to our former status.'"

"Indra then said, 'Because you served the Supreme Lord Śrī Keśava by observing Ekādaśī, you have become worshipping even by me, and I can see that you are now completely purified of sin. Whosoever engages in devotional service to Lord Śrī Hari or Lord Śiva becomes praiseworthy and worshipping even by me. Of this there is no doubt.' Lord Indra then gave Mālyavān and Puṣpavatī free rein to enjoy each other and wander about his heavenly planet."

"Therefore, O Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, one should strictly observe a fast on the sacred day of Lord Hari, especially on this Jayā Ekādaśī, which frees one from the sin of killing even a twice born *brāhmaṇa*. A great soul who observes this fast with full faith and devotion has in effect given all kinds of charity, performed all kinds of sacrifice, and bathed in all the Holy places of pilgrimage. Fasting on Jayā Ekādaśī qualifies one to reside in Vaikuṅṭha and enjoy unending happiness for billions of *yugas* – indeed, forever as the soul is eternal. O great king, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continued, one who even hears or reads these wonderful glories of Jayā Ekādaśī achieves the blessed merit attained by performing an Agnistoma fire sacrifice, during which the hymns from the Sāma-veda are recited."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Māgha-shukla Ekādaśī, or Jayā Ekādaśī, from the Bhaviṣya-uttara Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

Kāmadeva, lust personified, has five names according to the Amara-kosha dictionary: *kandarpa darpako* 'nanga *kAmah pancha-sharaih smarah* "Cupid has five names; (1) Cupid; (2) *Darpaka*, 'he who prevents future events'; (3) *Ananga*, 'he who has no physical body'; (4) *Kāma*, 'lust personified'; and (5) *Pancha-sharaih*, 'he who holds five arrows' ".

*Kandarpa*: In the tenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā (BG 10:28.) Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *prajanash cAsmi kandarpah*; "Of causes for procreation, I am Kandarpa". The word Kandarpa also means "very beautiful". Kandarpa appeared as Lord Kṛṣṇa's son Pradyumna in Dvārakā.

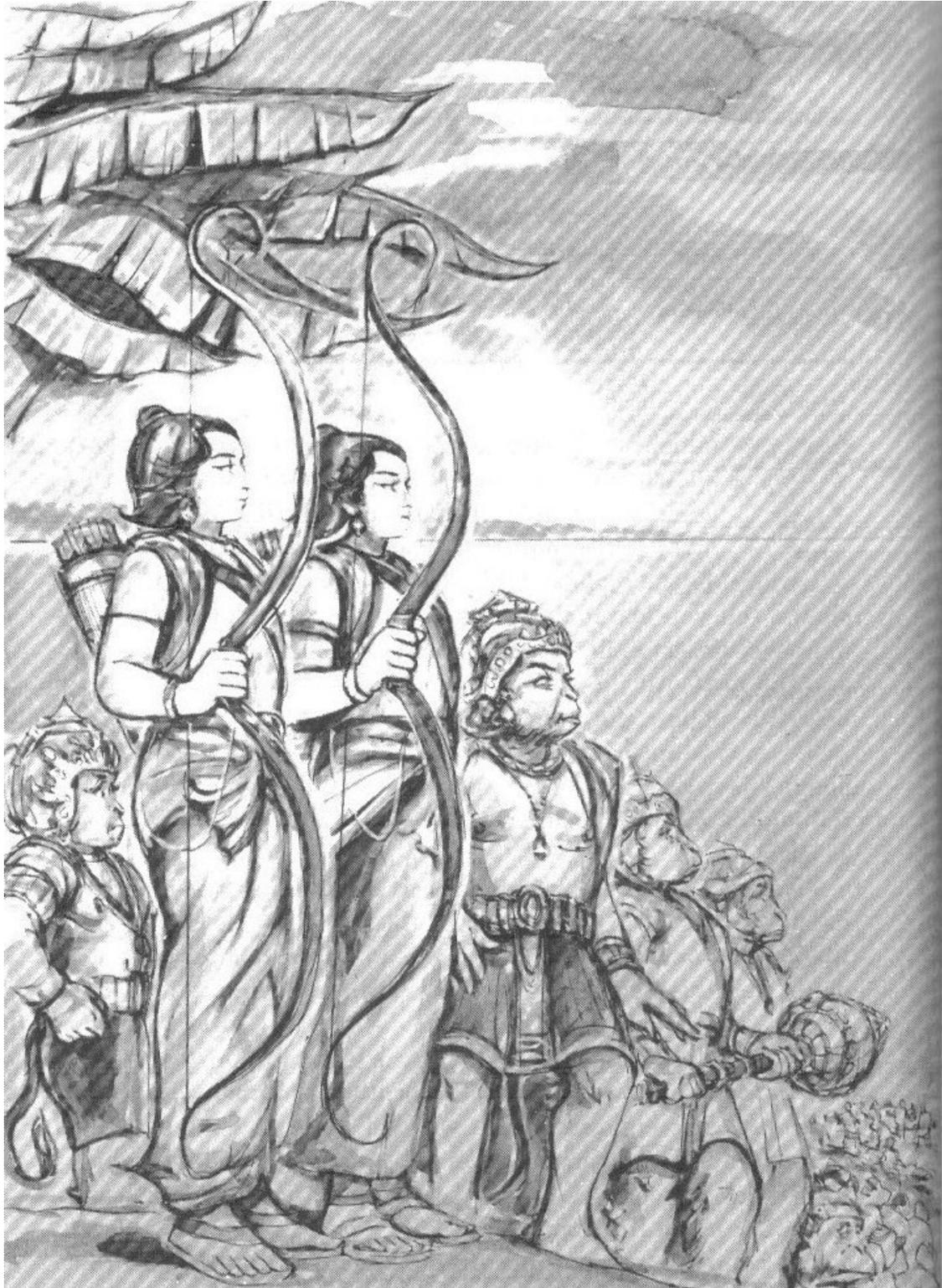
*Darpaka*: This name indicates that Cupid can perceive what is to take place and prevent it from happening. Specifically, he tries to impede pure spiritual activity by alluring one's mind and forcibly engaging one in material sense enjoyment.

*Ananga*: Once, when Cupid disturbed the meditation of Lord Śiva, that powerful demigod burned him to ashes. Still, Śiva gave Cupid the benediction that he would act in the world even without a physical body - like a ghost.

*Kāma*: In Bhagavad Gītā BG 7:11.) Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, *dharmAviruddho bhuteshu kAmo 'smi*: "I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles."

*Pancha-sharaih*: The five arrows with which Cupid pierces the mind of the living entities are taste, touch, sound, smell, and sight.

These are the five names of Cupid, who enchants all living entities and makes them do whatever he wants. Without receiving the mercy of Guru and Kṛṣṇa one cannot resist his power.



*On the shore of the sea, Lord Rama said to Lakshmana, "How can We cross this vast ocean teeming as it is with sharks and other ferocious fish?"*

## Vijayā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, O Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, O glorious son of Vasudeva, please be merciful to me and describe the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Phālguna (February-March).

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, O Yudhiṣṭhira, O king of kings, gladly I shall tell you about this great fast, known as Vijayā Ekādaśī. Whoever observes it certainly achieves success in this life and the next. All the sins of one who fasts on this Ekādaśī and hears its sublime glories are eradicated.

Nārada Muni once asked Lord Brahmā, who sits on a lotus flower about the Vijayā Ekādaśī. Śrī Nārada said, O best of all the demigods, kindly tell me the merit one can achieve by faithfully observing Vijayā Ekādaśī.’

Nārada’s great father then replied, My dear son, this oldest of fasting days is pure, and it nullifies all sins. I have never revealed this to anyone until today, but you can understand beyond any doubt that this Ekādaśī bestows the result indicated by its name... (Vijayā means Victory).

When Lord Rāma was exiled to the forest for fourteen years, He, the goddess Sitā, and His divine brother Lakṣmaṇa stayed at Pañcavaṭī as mendicants. Mother Sitā was then kidnapped by the demon Rāvaṇa, and Lord Rāma seemingly became bewildered like an ordinary man by distress. While searching for His beloved consort, the Lord came upon the dying Jaṭāyu and thereafter killed His enemy Kabandha. The great devotee-vulture Jaṭāyu returned to Vaikuṅṭha after telling Rāma how His dear Sitā had been abducted by Rāvaṇa.

“ ‘Later, Lord Rāma and Sugrīva, the king of the monkeys, became friends. Together they amassed a grand army of monkeys and bears and sent Hanumānji to Śrī Laṅkā, where he was able to see Jānaki, Sitā devī in an *asoka* garden. He delivered Lord Rāma’s message and showed the ring proving his authenticity for rendering such great service to the Supreme Lord.

With the help of Sugrīva, Lord Rāma proceeded toward Śrī Laṅkā. Upon arriving at the shore of the ocean with the army of monkeys, He could understand that the water was uncommonly deep. Thus He said to Lakṣmaṇa, O son of Sumitrā, how can We earn enough merit to be able to cross this vast ocean, the unfathomable abode of Varuṇa? I can see no easy way to cross it, teeming as it is with sharks and other ferocious aquatics.

“ ‘Lakṣmaṇa replied, O best of all beings, O origin of all the devas, O primal personality, the great sage Bakadālbhya lives on an island just four miles from here. O Rāghava, he has seen many Brahmās come and go, so aged and wise is he. Let us ask him how We can safely reach Our goal.

So Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa proceeded to the humble *āśrama* of the incomparable Bakadālbhya Muni. Approaching him, the two Lords paid Their respectful obeisances to him as if he were a second Viṣṇu. Bakadālbhya could understand, however, that Śrī Rāma was actually the Supreme Personality of God, who for His own reasons had appeared on the Earth as a human being.

"O Rāma", said Bakadālbhya, "O best of the beings, why have You come to my lowly abode?"

The Lord replied, "O great, twice born *brāhmaṇa*, I have come here to the ocean shore with My phalanx of monkey and bear warriors in order to cross the sea and conquer Laṅkā and its demon horde. O greatest of sages, please be merciful unto Me and please tell Me how I can cross this vast ocean. That is why I have come to you today."

The sage said, "O Lord Rāma, I shall tell you of the most exalted of all fasts, observing which You will surely conquer Rāvaṇa and be eternally glorified. Kindly now listen with full attention."

"On the day before Ekādaśī, fashion a water pot of gold or silver, or even copper. Even clay will do if these metals are unavailable. Fill the pot with pure water and then decorate it nicely with mango leaves. Cover it and place it near a holy altar upon a mound of seven grains. Now take Your morning bath, decorate the water pot with flower garlands and sandalwood paste, and in the concave lid atop of the pot place there the barley, pomegranate and coconut. Now with great love and devotion worship the waterpot Deity form and offer Him incense, sandalwood paste, flowers, a ghee lamp, and a plate of sumptuous foods. Remain awake that night beside this sacred pot. On top of the lid filled with barley, etc., place a golden *mūrtī* of Lord Śrī Nārāyaṇa.

“ ‘ When Ekādaśī dawns, take Your morning bath and then decorate the water pot with fine sandalwood paste and garlands. Then worship the pot again with first class incense, lamps, sandalwood paste and flowers dipped in sandalwood paste, and then devoutly/devotedly place many kinds of cooked food, pomegranate, and coconut before the water pot. Then remain awake over night.

When the Dvādaśī dawns, take the waterpot to the bank of a holy river, or even to the shore of a small pond. After worshipping it again properly, O King of kings, offer it with all the aforementioned ingredients to a pure hearted *brāhmaṇa*, expert in the Vedic sciences. If You and Your military commanders observe the Vijayā Ekādaśī in this way, You will surely be victorious in every way."

Lord Rāmacandra, the Supreme Personality of God, did just as Bakadālbhya Muni instructed and thus He conquered all demoniac forces. Similarly, anyone who observes the Vijayā Ekādaśī in this way will always be victorious in this mortal world, and after leaving this world he/she will reside forever in the anxiety free realm of the Kingdom of God.

O Nārada, my son, from this history you can understand why one should observe this Ekādaśī fast properly, strictly following the rules and regulations. This fast is powerful enough to eradicate all one's sinful reactions, even the most abominable ones.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa concluded, O Yudhiṣṭhira, anyone who reads or hears this history will attain the same great merit as that which is earned by performing a horse sacrifice.

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Phālguna-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī or Vijayā Ekādaśī, from the Skanda Purāṇa.*

## Notes

**Sugriva** a great monkey, was the son of Indra and AhilyA. She was the wife of Gautama, one of the seven great sages who appeared from the mind of Lord Brahmā. Indra disguised himself as Gautama Muni and seduced AhilyA, who had been blessed that she would never age beyond sixteen. She was the most beautiful lady on earth, and both Indra and the sun-deity became enamored by her beauty. One after the other, Indra and the sun-deity came to her in the form of Gautama Muni and had union with her, and Sugriva and VALi were born as a result, respectively (Sugriva of Indra's union and VALi of Surya's union).

At first, Sugriva and VALi looked like human beings, but when Gautama discovered his wife's infidelity, he angrily threw both the boys into the ocean saying "If you are not my sons, turn into monkeys". Thus they became monkeys. Sugriva helped his friend Rāma to find Sitā devi, and in return Rāma helped Sugriva regain his kingdom of KishkindhA from his brother VALi.

Regarding Gautama Muni's possessing a spectacularly wife, the moralist Canakhya Pandita says:

*RinakartA pitA shatruh MAAt cha vyabhichArinI*

*BhAryA rUpavatI shatruh Putra shatruh kupanditah*

"In this world, a man has four enemies; a father who is a debtor, a mother who is like a prostitute, a beautiful wife, and a son who is uninterested in spiritual science" A beautiful wife is an enemy because many other men will be attracted to her.

The seven grains are barley, wheat, rice, corn, chickpeas, kukani, and dahl or peas.



*As king Vasuratha slept, the beautiful woman killed all the barbarians with her blazing cakra*

## Āmalakī Ekādaśī

**K**ing Māndhātā once said to Vasiṣṭha Muni, "O great sage, kindly be merciful to me and tell me of a holy fast that will benefit me eternally."

Vasiṣṭha Muni replied. "O king, kindly listen as I describe the best of all fast days, Āmalakī Ekādaśī. He who faithfully observes a fast on this Ekādaśī obtains enormous wealth, gets free of the effects of all kinds of sins, and attains liberation. Fasting on this Ekādaśī is more purifying than donating one thousand cows in charity to a pure brāhmaṇa. So please hear me attentively as I tell you the story of a hunter who, though daily engaged in killing innocent animals for his living, achieved liberation by observing a fast on Āmalakī Ekādaśī following the prescribed rules and regulations of worship.

"There was once a kingdom named Vaidiṣā, where all the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* were equally endowed with Vedic knowledge, great bodily strength, and fine intelligence. O lion among kings, the whole kingdom was full of Vedic sounds, not a single person was atheistic, and no one sinned. The ruler of this kingdom was King Pāśabinduka, a member of the dynasty of Soma, the moon. He was also known as Citraratha and was very religious and truthful. It is said that King Citraratha had the strength of ten thousand elephants and that he was very wealthy and knew the six branches of Vedic wisdom perfectly.

"During the reign of Mahārāja Citraratha, not a single person in his kingdom attempted to practice another's *dharma* so perfectly engaged in their own dharmas were all the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. Neither miser nor pauper was to be seen throughout the land, not was there ever a drought or flood. Indeed, the kingdom was free of disease, and everyone enjoyed good health. The people rendered loving devotional service to the Supreme Personality of God, Lord Viṣṇu, as did the king, who also rendered special service to Lord Śiva. Moreover, twice a month everyone fasted on Ekādaśī.

"In this way, O best of kings, the citizens of Vaidiṣā lived many long years in great happiness and prosperity. Giving up all varieties of materialistic religion, they completely dedicated themselves to the loving service of the Supreme Lord, Hari.

"Once, in the month of Phalguna, the holy fast of Āmalakī Ekādaśī arrived, conjoined with Dvādaśī. King Citraratha realised that this particular fast would bestow especially great benefit, and thus he and all the citizens of Vaidiṣā observed this sacred Ekādaśī very strictly, carefully following all the rules and regulations.

"After bathing in the river, the king and all his subjects went to the temple of Lord Viṣṇu, where an Āmalakī tree grew. First the king and his leading sages offered the tree a pot filled with water, as well as a fine canopy, shoes, gold, diamonds, rubies, pearls, sapphires, and aromatic incense. Then they worshiped Lord Paraśurāma with these prayers: 'O Lord Paraśurāma, O son of Reṇukā, O all-pleasing one, O liberator of the worlds, kindly come beneath this holy Āmalakī

tree and accept our humble obeisances.' Then they prayed to the Āmalakī tree: 'O Āmalakī, O offspring of Lord Brahmā, you can destroy all kinds of sinful reactions. Please accept our respectful obeisances and these humble gifts. O Āmalakī, you are actually the form of Brahman, and you were once worshiped by Lord Rāmacandra Himself. Whoever circumambulates you is therefore immediately freed of all his sins.'

"After offering these excellent prayers, King Citraratha and his subjects remained awake throughout the night, praying and worshiping according to the regulations governing a sacred Ekādaśī fast. It was during this auspicious time of fasting and prayer that a very irreligious man approached the assembly, a man who maintained himself and his family by killing animals. Burdened with both fatigue and sin, the hunter saw the king and the citizens of Vaidiṣā observing Āmalakī Ekādaśī by performing an all-night vigil, fasting, and worshiping Lord Viṣṇu in the beautiful forest setting, which was brilliantly illuminated by many lamps. The hunter hid nearby, wondering what this extraordinary sight before him was.

'What is going on here?' he thought. What he saw in that lovely forest beneath the holy Āmalakī tree was the Deity of Lord Dāmodara being worshiped upon the āsana of a waterpot, and what he heard were devotees singing sacred songs describing Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental forms and pastimes. Despite himself, that staunchly irreligious killer of innocent birds and animals spent the entire night in great amazement as he watched the Ekādaśī celebration and listened to the glorification of the Lord.

"Soon after sunrise, the king and his royal retinue - including the court sages and all the citizens - completed their observance of Ekādaśī and returned to the city of Vaidiṣā. The hunter then returned to his hut and happily ate his meal. In due time the hunter died, but the merit he had gained by fasting on Āmalakī Ekādaśī and hearing the glorification of the Supreme Personality of God, as well as by being forced to stay awake all night, made him eligible to be reborn as a great king endowed with many chariots, elephants, horses, and soldiers. His name was Vasūratha, the son of King Vidūratha, and he ruled over the kingdom of Jayantī.

"King Vasūratha was strong and fearless, as effulgent as the Sun, and as handsome as the Moon. In strength he was like Viṣṇu, and in forgiveness like the Earth itself. Very charitable and every truthful, King Vasūratha always rendered loving devotional service to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Viṣṇu. He therefore became very well versed in Vedic knowledge. Always active in the affairs of state, he enjoyed taking excellent care of his subjects, as though they were his own children. He disliked pride in anyone and would smash it when he saw it. He performed many kinds of sacrifices, and he always made certain that the needy in his kingdom received enough charity.

"One day, while hunting in the jungle, King Vasūratha strayed from the footpath and lost his way. Wandering for some time and eventually growing weary, he paused beneath a tree and, using his arms as a pillow, fell asleep. As he slept, some barbarian tribesmen came upon him and, remembering their longstanding enmity toward the king, began discussing among themselves various ways to kill him. 'It is because he killed our fathers, mothers, brothers-in-law, grandsons, nephews, and uncles that we are forced to aimlessly wander like so many madmen in the forest.' So saying, they prepared to kill King Vasūratha with various weapons, including spears, swords, arrows and mystic ropes.

"But none of these deadly weapons could even touch the sleeping king, and soon the uncivilised, dog-eating tribesmen grew frightened. Their fear sapped their strength, and before long they lost what little intelligence they had and became almost unconscious with bewilderment and weakness. Suddenly a beautiful woman appeared from the king's body, startling the aborigines. Decorated with many ornaments, emitting a wonderful fragrance, wearing an excellent garland around her neck, her eyebrows drawn in a mood of fierce anger, and her fiery red eyes ablaze, she looked like death personified. With her blazing chakra discus she quickly killed all the tribal hunters, who had tried to slay the sleeping king.

"Just then the king awoke, and seeing all the dead tribesmen lying around him, he was astonished. He wondered, 'These are all great enemies of mine! Who has slain them so violently? Who is my great benefactor?'

"At that very moment he heard a voice from the sky: 'You ask who helped you. Well, who is that person who alone can help anyone in distress? He is none other than Śrī Keśava, the Supreme Personality of God, He who saves all who take shelter of Him without any selfish motive.'

"Upon hearing these words, King Vasūratha became over-whelmed with love for the Personality of God. He returned to his capital city and ruled there like a second Indra, without any obstacles at all.

"Therefore, O King Māndhātā," the venerable Vasiṣṭha Muni concluded, "...anyone who observes this holy Āmalakī Ekādaśī will undoubtedly attain the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu, so great is the religious merit earned from the observance of this most sacred fast day."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Phālguna-sukla Ekādaśī, or Āmalakī Ekādaśī, from the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.*



*The celestial dancing girl Manjughosha slowly approached the sage Medhavi, enticing him with her graceful movements and sweet singing*

## Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Supreme Lord, I have heard from You the explanation of Āmalakī Ekādaśī which occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Phālguna (February-March), and now I wish to hear about the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Caitra (March-April). What is its name, O Lord, and what results can one attain by observing it?"

The Supreme Personality of God, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, replied, "O best of kings, for the benefit of everyone I shall gladly describe to you the glories of this Ekādaśī, which is known as Pāpamocanī. The history of this Ekādaśī was once narrated to the Emperor Māndhātā by Lomaṣa Ṛṣi. King Māndhātā addressed the ṛṣi, 'O great sage, for the benefit of all people, please tell me the name of the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Caitra, and please explain the process for observing it. Also, please describe the benefits one gains by observing this Ekādaśī.'

"Lomasā Ṛṣi replied, "The Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark part of the month of Caitra is named Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī. For the faithful devotee it removes the influences of ghosts and demons. O lion among men, this Ekādaśī also awards the eight perfections of life, fulfils all kinds of desires, purifies one's life of all sinful reactions, and makes a person perfectly virtuous.

"Now please listen to a historical account concerning this Ekādaśī and Citraratha, the chief of the Gandharvas (heavenly musicians). During the spring season, in the company of heavenly dancing girls, Citraratha once came upon a beautiful forest bursting forth with a great variety of flowers. There he and the girls joined the Gandharvas and many Kinnaras, along with Lord Indra himself, the king of heaven, who was enjoying a visit there. Everyone felt that there was no better garden than this forest. Many sages were also present, performing their austerities and penances. The demigods particularly enjoyed visiting this celestial garden during the months of Caitra and Vaisākha (April-May).

"A great sage named Medhāvī resided in that forest, and the very attractive dancing girls would always attempt to seduce him. One famous girl in particular, Mañjughoṣā, contrived many ways to allure the exalted Muni, but out of great respect for the sage and feat of his power, which he had attained after years and years of ascetics, she would not come very close to him. At a spot two miles from the sage, she pitched a tent and began singing very sweetly as she played a tamboura. Cupid himself became excited when he saw and heard her perform so nicely and smelled the fragrance of her sandal-paste unguent. He remembered his own unfortunate experience with Lord Śiva and decided to take revenge by seducing Medhāvī. (see footnote 1)

"Using the eyebrows of Mañjughoṣā as a bow, her glances as a bowstring, her eyes as arrows, and her breasts as a target, Cupid approached Medhāvī in order to tempt him to break his trance and his vows. In other words, Cupid engaged Mañjughoṣā as his assistant, and when she looked at that powerful and attractive young sage, she also became agitated by lust. Seeing that he was

highly intelligent and learned, wearing a clean white *brāhmaṇa*'s thread draped across his shoulder, holding a sannyāsī's staff, and sitting handsomely in the aśrāma of Cyavana Ṛṣi, Mañjughoṣā came before him.

"She began to sing seductively, and the small bells of her belt and around her ankles, together with the bangles on her wrists, produced a delightful musical symphony. The sage Medhāvī was enchanted. He understood that this beautiful young woman desired union with him, and at that instant Cupid increased his attraction for Mañjughoṣā by releasing his powerful weapons of taste, touch, sight, smell, and sound.

"Slowly Mañjughoṣā approached Medhāvī, her bodily movements and sweet glances attracting him. She gracefully put her tamboura down and embraced the sage with her two arms, just as a creeper winds itself around a strong tree. Captivated, Medhāvī gave up his meditation and decided to sport with her - and instantly his purity of heart and mind abandoned him. Forgetting even the difference between night and day, he went away with her to sport for a long, long time. (see footnote 2)

"Seeing that the young yogī's sanctity had become seriously eroded, Mañjughoṣā decided to abandon him and return home. She said. "O great one, please permit me to return home."

"Medhāvī replied, "But you have only just arrived, O beautiful one. Please stay with me at least until tomorrow."

"Fearful of the sage's yogic power, Mañjughoṣā stayed with Medhāvī for precisely fifty-seven years, nine months, and three days, but to Medhāvī all this time seemed like a moment. Again she asked him, "Please permit me to leave."

"Medhāvī replied, "O dear one, listen to me. Stay with me for one more night, and then you may leave tomorrow morning. Just stay with me until I have performed my morning duties and chanted the sacred Gāyatrī mantra. Please wait until then."

"Mañjughoṣā was still fearful of the sage's great yogic power, but she forced a smile and said, "How long will it take you to finish your morning hymns and rituals? Please be merciful and think of all the time you have already spent with me."

"The sage reflected on the years he had been with Mañjughoṣā and then said with great astonishment. "Why, I have spent more than fifty-seven years with you!" His eyes turned red and began to emanate sparks. He now regarded Mañjughoṣā as death personified and the destroyer of his spiritual life. "You rascal woman! You have turned all the hard-earned results of my austerities to ashes!" Trembling with anger, he cursed Mañjughoṣā, "O sinful one, O hard-hearted, degraded one! You know only sin! May all terrible fortune be yours! O rascal woman, I curse you to become an evil hobgoblin - *piśāca*!"

"Cursed by the sage Medhāvī, the beautiful Mañjughoṣā humbly beseeched him, "O best of the brāhmanas, please be merciful to me and revoke your curse! O great one, it is said that

association with pure devotees gives immediate results but their curses take effect only after seven days. I have been with you for fifty-seven years, O master, so please be kind to me!"

"Medhāvī Muni replied, "O gentle lady what can I possibly do? You have destroyed all my austerities. But even though you have done this sinful deed, I shall tell you a way you can be released from my wrath. In the dark fortnight of the month of Caitra there is an all-auspicious Ekādaśī that removes all one's sins. Its name is Pāpamochanī, O beautiful one, and whoever fasts on this sacred day becomes completely freed from having to take birth in any kind of devilish form."

"With these words, the sage left at once for his father's āśrama. Seeing him enter the hermitage, Cyavana Muni said, "O son, by acting unlawfully you have squandered the wealth of your penances and austerities." "Medhavī replied, "O Father, kindly reveal what atonement I must perform to remove the obnoxious sin I have incurred by privately associating with the dancing girl Mañjughoṣā." "Cyavana Muni answered, "Dear son, you must fast on Pāpamochanī Ekādaśī, which occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Caitra. It eradicates all sins, no matter how grievous they may be." "Medhāvī followed his father's advice and fasted on Pāpamochanī Ekādaśī. Thus all his sins were destroyed and he again became filled with excellent merit. Similarly, Mañjughoṣā observed the same fast and became free of the hobgoblin curse. Ascending once again to the heavenly spheres, she too returned to her former position.' "Lomaśa Ṛṣi continued, 'Thus, O king, the great benefit of fasting on Pāpamochanī Ekādaśī is that whoever does so with faith and devotion will have all his sins completely destroyed.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa concluded, "O King Yudhiṣṭhira, whoever reads or hears about Pāpamochanī Ekādaśī obtains the very same merit he would get if he donated a thousand cows in charity, and he also nullifies the sinful reactions he may have incurred by killing a *brāhmaṇa*, killing an embryo through abortion, drinking liquor, or having sex with his guru's wife. Such is the incalculable benefit of properly observing this holy day of Pāpamochanī Ekādaśī, which is so dear to Me and so meritorious."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Caitra-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, or Pāpamochanī Ekādaśī, from the Bhaviṣya-uttara Purāṇa.*

## Notes

1. After Lord Śiva lost his dear wife Sati at the sacrificial arena of Prajāpati Daksha, Śiva destroyed the entire arena. Then he brought his father-in-law Daksha back to life by giving him the head of a goat, and finally he sat down to meditate for sixty thousand years. Lord Brahmā, however, arranged for Kāmadeva (Cupid) to come and break Śiva's meditation. Using his arrows of sound, taste, touch, sight, and smell, Cupid attacked Śiva, who at last awoke from his trance. He was so angry at being disturbed that he instantly burned Cupid to ashes with a glance from his third eye.

2. Female association is so powerful that a man forgets his time, energy, possessions, and even his own identity. As it is said in the Niti-shāstra, *striya charitram purushasya bhābyaM daivo vijānāti kuto manushyāḥ*: "Even the demigods cannot predict the behavior of a woman. Nor can they understand the fortune of a man or how it will

determine his destiny." According to Yajñavalkya Muni, "A (celibate) person who desires spiritual life should give up all association with women, including thinking of them, seeing them, talking with them in a secluded place, taking service from them, or having sexual intercourse with them."



*Lalita turned into a fearful cannibal – a huge man-eating demon who terrified everyone*

## Kāmadā Ekādaśī

Śrī Sūta Gosvāmi said, "O sages, let me offer my humble and respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Hari, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī and Vasudeva, by whose mercy I can describe the fast day that removes all kinds of sins. It was to the devoted Yudhiṣṭhira that Lord Kṛṣṇa glorified the twenty-four primary Ekādaśīs, which destroy sin, and now I shall recount one of those narrations to you. Great-learned sages have selected these twenty-four narrations from the eighteen Purāṇas, for they are truly sublime.

Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, 'O Lord Kṛṣṇa, O Vāsudeva, please accept my humble obeisances. Please describe to me the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light part of the month of Caitra [March-April]. What is its name, and what are its glories?'

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, 'O Yudhiṣṭhira, please listen to Me attentively as I relate the ancient history of this sacred Ekādaśī, a history Vasiṣṭha Muni once related to King Dilīpa, the great-grandfather of Lord Rāmacandra.

King Dilīpa asked the great sage Vasiṣṭha, "O wise *brāhmaṇa*, I wish to hear about the Ekādaśī that comes during the light part of the month of Caitra. Please describe it to me."

Vasiṣṭha Muni replied, "O king, your inquiry is glories. Gladly shall I tell you what you wish to know. The Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of Caitra is named Kāmadā Ekādaśī. It consumes all sins, as a forest fire consumes a supply of dry firewood. It is very purifying, and it bestows the highest merit upon one who faithfully observes it. O king, now hear an ancient history which is so meritorious that it removes all one's sins simply by being heard.

Once, long ago, there existed a city-state named Ratnapura, which was decorated with gold and jewels and in which sharp-fanged snakes would enjoy intoxication. King Puṇḍarīka was the ruler of this most beautiful kingdom, which numbered many Gandharvas, Kinnaras, and Apsarās among its citizens.

Among the Gandharvas were Lalita and his wife Lalitā, who was an especially lovely dancer. These two were intensely attracted to each other, and their home was full of great wealth and fine food. Lalitā loved her husband dearly, and likewise he constantly thought of her within his heart.

Once, at the court of King Puṇḍarīka, many Gandharvas were dancing and Lalita was singing alone, without his wife. He could not help thinking about her as he sang, and because of this distraction he lost track of the song's meter and melody. Indeed, Lalita sang the ending of his song improperly, and one of the envious snakes who was in attendance at the king's court complained to the king that Lalita was absorbed in thinking of his wife instead of his sovereign. the king became furious upon hearing this, and his eyes turned crimson with rage. Suddenly he shouted, 'O foolish knave, because you were lustfully thinking of a woman instead of reverently thinking of your king as you performed your court duties, I curse you to at once become a

cannibal!

O king, Lalita immediately became a fearful cannibal, a great man-eating demon whose appearance terrified everyone. His arms were eight miles long, his mouth was as big as a huge cave, his eyes were as awesome as the sun and moon, his nostrils resembled enormous pits in the earth, his neck was a veritable mountain, his hips were four miles wide, and his gigantic body stood a full sixty-four miles high. Thus poor Lalita, the loving Gandharva singer, had to suffer the reaction of his offense against King Puṇḍarīka.

Seeing her husband suffering as a horrible cannibal, Lalitā became overwhelmed with grief. She thought, 'Now that my dear husband is suffering the effects of the kings' curse, what is to be my lot? What should I do? Where should I go?' In this way Lalitā grieved day and night. Instead of enjoying life as a Gandharvas wife, she had to wander everywhere in the thick jungle with her monstrous husband, who had fallen completely under the spell of the king's curse and was wholly engaged in terrible sinful activities. He wandered fitfully across forbidding region, a once-beautiful Gandharva now reduced to the ghastly behaviour of a man-eater. Utterly distraught to see her dear husband suffer so much in his dreadful condition, Lalitā began to cry as she followed his mad journeying.

By good fortune, however, Lalitā came upon the sage Śṛṅgi one day. He was sitting on the peak of the famous Vindhyācala Hill. Approaching him, she immediately offered the ascetic her respectful obeisances. The sage noticed her bowing down before him and said, 'O most beautiful one, who are you? Whose daughter are you, and why have you come here? Please tell me everything in truth.

Lalitā replied, 'O great age, I am the daughter of the great Gandharva Vīradhanvā, and my name is Lalitā. I roam the forests and plains with my dear husband, whom King Puṇḍarīka has cursed to become a man-eating demon. O brāhmana, I am greatly aggrieved to see his ferocious form and terribly sinful activities. O master, please tell me how I can perform some act of atonement on behalf of my husband. What pious act can I perform to free him from this demonic form, O best of *brāhmaṇas*?

'The sage replied, 'O heavenly maiden, there is an Ekādaśī named Kāmadā that occurs in the light fortnight of the month of Caitra. It is coming up soon. Whoever fasts on this day has all his desires fulfilled. If you observe this Ekādaśī fast according to its rules and regulations and give the merit you thus earn to your husband, he will be freed from the curse at once.' Lalitā was overjoyed to hear these words from the sage.

Lalita faithfully observed the fast of Kāmadā Ekādaśī according to the instructions of the sage Śṛṅgi and on Dvādaśī she appeared before him and the Deity of Lord Vāsudeva and said, 'I have faithfully observed the fast of Kāmadā Ekādaśī. By the merit earned through my observance of this fast, let my husband be free from the curse that has turned him into a demoniac cannibal. May the merit I have gained thus free him from misery.'

As soon as Lalitā finished speaking, her husband, who stood nearby, was at once freed from the king's curse. He immediately regained his original form as the Gandharva Lalita, a handsome

heavenly singer adorned with many beautiful ornaments. Now, with his wife Lalitā, he could enjoy even more opulence than before. All this was accomplished by the power and glory of Kāmadā Ekādaśī. At last the Gandharva couple boarded a celestial airplane and ascended to heaven.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continued, 'O Yudhiṣṭhira, best of kings, anyone who hears this wonderful narration should certainly observe holy Kāmadā Ekādaśī to the best of his ability, such great merit does it bestow upon the faithful devotee. I have therefore described its glories to you for the benefit of all humanity.

There is no better Ekādaśī than Kāmadā Ekādaśī. It can eradicate even the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa*, and it also nullifies demoniac curses and cleanses the consciousness. In all the three worlds, among movable and immovable living entities, there is no better day'.

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Caitra-śukla Ekādaśī, or Kāmadā Ekādaśī, from the Varāha Purāṇa.*



*Lord Krsna said to King Yudhisthira, "O Blessed son of Dharma, what Vasistha Muni once told Lord Ramachandra I shall now describe to you. Please hear attentively*

## Varūthinī Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Vāsudeva, I offer my most humble obeisances unto You. Please now describe to me the Ekādaśī of the dark fortnight of the month of Vaisākha (April-May), including its specific merits and influence."

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "O King, in this world and the next, the most auspicious and magnanimous Ekādaśī is Varūthinī Ekādaśī, which occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Vaisākha.

Whosoever observes a complete fast on this sacred day has his sins completely removed, obtains continuous happiness, and achieves all good fortune. Fasting on Varūthinī Ekādaśī makes even an unfortunate woman fortunate. Upon anyone who observes it, this Ekādaśī bestows material enjoyment in this life and liberation after the death of this present body. It destroys the sins of all and saves people from the miseries of repeated rebirth.

"By observing this Ekādaśī properly, King Māndhātā was liberated. Many other kings also benefited from observing it – kings such as Mahārāja Dhundhumāra, in the Ikṣvāku dynasty, who became free from leprosy resulting from the curse that Lord Śiva had imposed upon him as a punishment. Whatever merit one obtains by performing austerities and penances for ten thousand years is achieved by a person who observes Varūthinī Ekādaśī.

The merit one achieves by donating a great amount of gold during a solar eclipse at Kurukṣetra is gained by one who observes this one Ekādaśī with love and devotion, and certainly attains his goals in this life and the next. In short, this Ekādaśī is pure and very enlivening and the destroyer of all sins.

"Better than giving horses in charity is giving elephants, and better than giving elephants is giving land. But better still than giving land is the giving of sesame seeds, and better than that is giving of gold. Still better than giving gold is giving food grains - for all the forefathers, demigods (*devas*), and human beings become satisfied by eating grains. Thus there is no better gift of charity than this in the past, present or future. Yet learned scholars have declared that giving away a young maiden in marriage to a worthy person is equal to giving away food grains in charity. Moreover, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of God, has said that giving cows in charity is equal to giving food grains. Still better than all these charities is teaching spiritual knowledge to the ignorant. Yet all the merits one can attain by performing all these acts of charity are attained by one who fasts on the Varūthinī Ekādaśī."

"One who lives off the wealth of his daughters suffers a hellish condition until the inundation of the entire universe, O Bhārata. Therefore one should be especially careful not to use the wealth of his daughter. O best of kings, any householder who takes his daughter's wealth out of greed, who tries to sell his daughter, or who takes money from the man to whom he has given his daughter in marriage – such a householder becomes a lowly cat in his next life. Therefore it is

said that whoever, as a sacred act of charity, gives away in marriage a maiden decorated with various ornaments, and who also gives a dowry with her, obtains merit that cannot be described even by Citragupta, the chief secretary of Yamarāja in the heavenly planets. That very same merit, however, can be easily achieved by one who fasts on the Varūthinī Ekādaśī.

"The following things should be given up on the Daśamī, the day before the Ekādaśī: eating on bell-metal plates, eating any kind of *urad-dāl*, eating red-lentils, eating chick peas, eating *kondo*, eating spinach, eating honey, eating in another person's house/home, eating more than once and sex.

"On the Ekādaśī itself one should give up the following: gambling, sports, sleeping during the daytime, betel nuts and its leaf, brushing one's teeth, spreading rumours, faultfinding, talking to the spiritually fallen, anger, and lying. On the Dvādaśī the day after Ekādaśī, one should give up the following: eating on bell-metal plates, eating *urad-dāl*, red-lentils, or honey, lying, strenuous exercise or labour, eating more than once, any sexual activity, shaving the body, face or head, smearing oils on one's body, and eating in another's home."

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continued, "Whoever observes the Varūthinī Ekādaśī in this way becomes free from all sinful reactions and returns to the eternal, spiritual abode. One who worships Lord Janārdana on this Ekādaśī by staying awake throughout the entire night, also becomes free from all his previous sins and attains to the spiritual abode. Therefore, O king, he who is frightened of his accumulated sins and their attendant reactions, and thus of death itself, must observe Varūthinī Ekādaśī by fasting very strictly. Finally, O noble Yudhiṣṭhira, he who hears or reads this glorification of the sacred Varūthinī Ekādaśī obtains the merit earned by donating one thousand cows in charity, and at last he returns home, to the abode of Lord Viṣṇu."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Vaisākha-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, or Varūthinī Ekādaśī, from the Bhaviṣya-uttara Purāna.*

#### Notes

*Kondo* a grain that is primarily eaten by poor people and that resembles poppy seeds or agarpanthas seeds.



*Dhrstabuddhi began killing lions, deer, boars and wolves for food*

## Mohinī Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Janārdana, what is the name of the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Vaisākha (April-May) ? What is the process for observing it properly? Kindly narrate all of these details to me.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "O blessed son of Dharma, what Vasiṣṭha Muni once told to Lord Rāmacandra I shall now describe to you. Please listen to Me attentively.

"Lord Rāmacandra asked Vasiṣṭha Muni, 'O great sage, I would like to hear about the best of all fasting days that day which destroys all kinds of sins and sorrows. I have suffered long enough in separation from My dear Sitā, and so I wish to hear from you about how My suffering can be ended.'

"The sage Vasiṣṭha replied, 'O Lord Rāma, O You whose intelligence is so keen, simply by remembering Your name one can cross the ocean of the material world. You have questioned me in order to benefit all of humanity and fulfill everyone's desires. I shall now describe that day of fasting which purifies the whole world.

'O Rāma, that day is known as Vaisākha-śukla Ekādaśī, which falls on Dvādaśī. It removes all sins and is famous as Mohinī Ekādaśī. Truly, O dear Rāma, the merit of this Ekādaśī frees the fortunate soul who observes it from the network of illusion. Therefore, if You want to relieve Your suffering(s), observe this auspicious Ekādaśī perfectly, for it removes all obstacles from ones path and relieves the greatest miseries. Kindly listen as I describe its glories, because for one who even just hears about this auspicious Ekādaśī, the greatest sins are nullified.

'On the banks of River Sarasvatī there was once a beautiful city named Bhadrāvati, which was ruled by King Dyutīmān. O Rāma, that steadfast, truthful, and highly intelligent king was born in the dynasty of the Moon. In his kingdom was a merchant named Dhanapāla, who possessed a great deal of wealth of food grains and money. He was also very pious. Dhanapāla arranged for lakes to be dug, sacrificial arenas to be erected, and beautiful gardens to be cultivated for the benefit of all the citizens of Bhadrāvati. He was an excellent devotee of Lord Viṣṇu and had five sons: Sumāna, Dyutīmān, Medhāvī, Sukṛtī and Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī.

'Unfortunately, his son Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī always engaged in greatly sinful activities, such as sleeping with prostitutes and associating with similar degraded persons. He enjoyed illicit sex, gambling, and many other varieties of acts aimed at gratifying the senses. He disrespected the demigods, the *brāhmaṇas*, the forefathers and other elders of the community, as well as his family's guests. The evil-hearted Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī spent up his father's wealth indiscriminately, always feasting on untouchable foods and drinking alcohol to excess.

'One day Dhanapāla kicked Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī out of the house after he saw him walking along the road arm-in-arm with a known prostitute. From then on all Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī's relatives were highly

critical of him and distanced themselves from him also. After he had sold all of his ornaments and become destitute, the prostitute also abandoned him and insulted him because of his poverty.

“ 'Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī was now full of anxiety, and also hungry. He thought, "What should I do ? Where should I go ? How can I maintain myself ? He then began to steal. The king's constables arrested him, but when they learned who it was, and that his father was the famous Dhanapāla, they released him. He was caught and released in this way many times. But at last, sick of his arrogance and total disrespect for others, and their property, the ill-mannered Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī was apprehended, handcuffed, and then beaten. After whipping him, the king's marshals warned him, "O evil minded one, there is no place for you in this kingdom.

'However, Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī was freed from his tribulation by his father and immediately thereafter entered the dense forest. He wandered here and there, hungry and thirsty and suffering greatly. Eventually he began killing the jungle animals, the lions, deer, boars, and even wolves for food. Always ready in his hand was his bow, always on his shoulder was his quiver full of arrows. He also killed many birds, such as chakorras, peacocks, kankas, doves and pigeons. He unhesitatingly slaughtered many species of birds and animals to maintain his sinful way of life, the sinful results accumulating more and more each day. On account of his previous sins, he was now immersed in an ocean of great sin that was so relentless that it appeared that he could not get out.

“ 'Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī was always miserable and anxious, but one day, during the month of Vaisākha, by the force of some of his past merit he chanced upon the sacred *āśrama* of Kauṇḍinya Muni. The great sage had just finished bathing in the River Ganges and water was dripping from him still. Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī had the great good fortune to touch some of those droplets of water that were falling from the great sage's wet clothing. Instantly Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī was freed of his ignorance, and his sinful reactions were reduced. Offering his humble obeisances to Kauṇḍinya Muni, Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī prayed to him with joined palms; "O great *brāhmaṇa*, please describe to me some of the atonement I may perform without too much endeavour. I have committed so many sins in my life, and these have now made me very poor.

“ 'The great Ṛṣi replied, "O son, listen with great attention, for by hearing me your life will change, and you will become free of all your remaining sins. In the light fortnight of this very month, Vaisākha (April-May) there occurs the sacred Mohinī Ekādaśī, which has the power to nullify sins as vast and weighty as Mount Sumeru. If you follow my advice and faithfully observe a fast on this Ekādaśī, which is so dear to Lord Hari, you will be freed from all the sinful reactions of many, many births.

“ 'Hearing these words with great joy, Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī promised to observe a fast on Mohinī Ekādaśī according to the sage's instructions and direction. O best of kings, O Rāma Bhagavān, by fasting completely on Mohinī Ekādaśī, the once sinful Dhṛṣṭhabuddhī, the prodigal son of the merchant Dhanapāla, became sinless. Afterwards he achieved a beautiful transcendental form and, free at last of all obstacles, rode upon the carrier of Lord Viṣṇu, Garuḍa, to the Supreme abode of the Lord.

“ 'O Rāma, the fast day of Mohinī Ekādaśī removes the darkest illusory attachments to material existence. There is thus no better fast day in all the three worlds than this.'

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa concluded, "and so, O Yudhiṣṭhira, there is no place of pilgrimage, no sacrifice, and no charity that can bestow merit equal to even one sixteenth of the merit a faithful devotee of Mine obtains by observing the Mohinī Ekādaśī. And He who hears and studies the glories of Mohinī Ekādaśī achieves the merit of giving away one thousand cows in charity.

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Vaisākha-śukla Ekādaśī, or Mohinī Ekādaśī, from the Kūrma Purāṇa.*



*Whoever fails to observe Aparā Ekadāsi must be reborn in the material world like one bubble among millions in the sea*

## Aparā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Janārdana, what is the name of the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Jyeṣṭha (May-June)? I wish to hear from You the glories of this sacred day of Hari. Please narrate everything to me"

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, "O king, your inquiry is wonderful because the answer will benefit the whole human society. This Ekādaśī is so sublime and meritorious that even the greatest sins can be erased by its potency. O great king, the name of this unlimitedly meritorious Ekādaśī is Aparā Ekādaśī. Whoever fasts on this holy day becomes famous all over the universe. Even such sins as killing a *brāhmaṇa*, a cow or an embryo; blasphemy; or having sex with another man's wife are completely eradicated by observing Aparā Ekādaśī.

"O king people who bear false witness are most sinful. A person who falsely or sarcastically glorifies another; one who cheats while weighing something on a scale; one who fails to execute the duties of his *varṇa* or *āśrama* (an unqualified man's posing as a *brāhmaṇa*, for example, or a person reciting the Vedas wrongly); one who invents his own scriptures; one who cheats others; one who is a charlatan astrologer, a cheating accountant, or a false āyurvedic doctor. All these are surely as bad as persons who bears false witness and they are all destined for hellish punishments. But simply by observing Aparā Ekādaśī, all such sinners become completely free of their sinful reactions.

"Warriors who fall from their *kṣatriya-dharma* and flee the battlefield go to a ferocious hell. But, O Yudhiṣṭhira, even such a fallen *kṣatriya*, if he observes fasting on the Aparā Ekādaśī, is freed of that great sin and goes to heaven.

"That disciple is the greatest sinner who, after receiving a proper spiritual education from his spiritual master, turns around and blasphemes him. Such a so-called disciple suffers unlimitedly. But even he, rascal though he be, if he simply observes Aparā Ekādaśī, can attain to the spiritual world. Listen, O king, as I describe to you further glories of this Ekādaśī.

"The merit attained by one who performs all of the following acts of piety is equal to the merit achieved by one who observes Aparā Ekādaśī: bathing three times daily in Puṣkara-kṣetra during Kārtika (October-November); bathing at Prayāg in the month of Māgh (January-February) when the sun is in the zodiac of Capricorn; rendering service to Lord Śiva at Varāṇasī during Śiva-rātri; offering oblations to one's forefathers at Gayā; bathing in the sacred River Gautamī when Jupiter transits Leo; having *darśana* of Lord Śiva at Kedārnātha; seeing Lord Badrinātha when the Sun transits the sign of Aquarius; and bathing at the time of a solar eclipse at Kurukṣetra and giving cows, elephants, and gold there in charity. All the merit one gets from performing these pious acts is gained by a person who observes the Aparā Ekādaśī fast. Also, the merit attained by one who donates a pregnant cow, along with gold and fertile land, is attained by one who fasts on this day.

"In other words, Aparā Ekādaśī is an axe that cuts down the fully matured forest full of trees of sinful deeds, it is a forest fire that burns sins as if they were kindling firewood, it is the sun blazing before one's dark misdeeds, and it is a lion stalking the meek deer of impiety. Therefore, O Yudhiṣṭhira, whoever truly fears his past and present sins must observe Aparā Ekādaśī very strictly. One who does not observe this fast must be born again in the material world, like one bubble among millions in a huge body of water, or like a small ant among all other species.

"Therefore one must faithfully observe the sacred Aparā Ekādaśī and worship the Supreme Personality of God, Śrī Trivikrama. One who does so is freed of all his sins and promoted to the abode of Lord Viṣṇu.

"O Bhārata, for the benefit of all humanity I have thus described to you this the importance of the holy Aparā Ekādaśī. Anyone who hears or reads this description is certainly freed from all kinds of sins, O king.

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Jyeṣṭha-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī or Aparā Ekādaśī, from the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

1. Puṣkara-kṣetra, in western India, is the only place on Earth where a bonafide temple of Lord Brahmā is to be found.

2. The Vedas declare, *narAh budbuda samAh*: "The human form of life is like a bubble in water". In water, many bubbles form and then suddenly burst a few seconds later. Thus if a person does not utilize his rare human body to serve the Supreme Personality of God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his life has no more value or permanence than a bubble in water. Therefore, as the Lord herein recommends, we should serve Him by fasting on *Hari-vAsara*, or Ekādaśī.

In this regard, Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes in the Śrīmad Bhagavatam (SB 2:1:4 purport) "The great ocean of material nature is tossing with the waves of time, and the so-called living conditioned are something like foaming bubbles, which appear before us as bodily self, wife, children, society, countrymen, etc. Due to a lack of knowledge of self, we become victimized by the force of ignorance and thus spoil the valuable energy of human life in a vain search after permanent living conditions, which are impossible in this material world."



*If a person fasts on Nirjala Ekadasi, the Visnuduttas will protect him from the fearful Yamadutas and take him to Lord Visnu's abode*

## Nirjalā Ekādaśī

Once Bhīmasena, the younger brother of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, asked the great sage Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the grandfather of the Pāṇḍavas, if it is possible to return to the spiritual world without having observed all the rules and regulations of the Ekādaśī fasts.

Bhīmasena said, "O greatly intelligent and learned grandfather, my brother Yudhiṣṭhira, my dear mother Kuntī, and my beloved wife Draupadī, as well as Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, fast completely on each Ekādaśī and strictly follow all the rules, guidelines and regulative injunctions of that sacred day. Being very religious, they always tell me that I should also fast on that day too. But, O grandfather, I tell them that I cannot live without eating, because unbearable to me. I can give widely in charity and worship Śrī Keśava properly, but I cannot be asked to fast on Ekādaśī. Please tell me how I can obtain the same merits result without fasting."

Hearing these words, Śrīla Vyāsadeva replied, "If you want to go to the heavenly planets and avoid the hellish planets, you should indeed observe a fast on both the light and dark Ekādaśīs."

Bhīma replied, "O great intelligent grandfather, please listen to my plea. O greatest of *munis*, since I cannot live if I eat only once in a day, how can I possibly live if I fast completely? Within my stomach burns a special fire named *vṛka*, the fire of digestion.

Only when I eat to my full satisfaction does the fire in my stomach become satisfied. O great sage, I might possibly be able to fast only once, so I beg that you tell me of an Ekādaśī that is worthy of my fasting and that includes all other Ekādaśīs. I shall faithfully observe that fast and hopefully still become eligible for liberation."

Śrīla Vyāsadeva replied, O king, you have heard from me about the various kinds of occupational duties, such as elaborate Vedic ceremonies and pujas. In the Kali-yuga, however, no one will be able to observe all these occupational and functional duties properly. I shall therefore tell you how, at practically no expense, one can endure some small austerity and achieve the greatest benefit and resultant happiness. The essence of what is written in the Vedic literatures known as the Purāṇas is that one should not eat on either the dark or light fortnight Ekādaśīs. One who fasts on Ekādaśīs saved from going to the hellish planets."

Hearing Śrīla Vyāsadeva's words, Bhīmasena, the strongest of all warriors, became frightened and began to shake like a leaf on a banyan tree in a strong wind. The frightened Bhīmasena then said, "O grandfather, what should I do? I am completely unable and ill equipped to fast twice in a month throughout the year! Please tell me of the one fasting day that will bestow the greatest benefit upon me!"

Vyāsadeva replied, "Without drinking even water, you should fast on the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Jyeṣṭha (May-June) when the sun travels in the sign of

Gemini and Taurus, According to learned personalities, on this day one may bathe and perform *ācamana* for purification. But while performing *ācamana* one may drink only that amount of water equal to a drop of gold, or that amount it takes to immerse a single mustard seed. Only this amount of water should be placed in the right palm for sipping, which one should form to resemble a cow's ear. If one drinks more water than this, he might as well have drunk wine.

"One must certainly not eat anything, for if he does so he breaks his fast. This rigid fast is in effect from sunrise on the Ekādaśī day to sunrise on the Dvādaśī day. If a person endeavours to observe this great fast very strictly, he easily achieves the result of observing all twenty-four other Ekādaśī fasts throughout the entire year.

"On Dvādaśī the devotee should bathe early in the morning. Then, according to the prescribed rules, guidelines and regulative injunctions, and of course depending on his ability, he should give some gold and water to worthy *brāhmaṇas*. Finally, he should cheerfully honour *prasādam* with a *brāhmaṇa*.

"O Bhīmasena, one who can fast on this special Ekādaśī in this manner reaps the benefit of having fasted on every Ekādaśī during the year. There is no doubt of this, nor should there be. O Bhīma, now hear the specific merit one gets by fasting on this Ekādaśī. The Supreme Lord Keśava, who holds a conch, discus, club and lotus, personally told me, 'Everyone should take shelter of Me and follow My instructions.' Then He told me that one who fasts on this Ekādaśī, without taking even drinking water or eating, becomes free of all sinful reactions, and that one who observes the difficult *nirjala* fast on Jyeṣṭha-śukla Ekādaśī truly reaps the benefit of all other Ekādaśī fasts.

"O Bhīmasena, in the Kali-yuga, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, when all the principles of the Vedas will have been destroyed or greatly minimised, and when there will be no proper charity or observance of the ancient Vedik principles and ceremonies, how will there be any means of purifying the self? But there is the opportunity to fast on Ekādaśī and become free of all one's past sins.

"O son of Vāyu, what more can I say to you? You should not eat during the Ekādaśīs that occur during the dark and light fortnights, and you should even give up drinking water on the particularly auspicious Ekādaśī day of Jyeṣṭha-śukla Ekādaśī. O Vṛkodara, whoever fasts on this Ekādaśī receives the merits of bathing in all the places of pilgrimage, giving all kinds of charities to worthy persons, and fasting on all the dark and light Ekādaśīs throughout the year, in one go. Of this there is no doubt. O tiger among men, whoever fasts on this Ekādaśī truly becomes a great person and achieves all manner of opulence and wealth, grains, strength, and health. And at the fearful moment of death, the terrible Yamadūtas, whose complexions are yellow and black and who brandish huge maces and twirl mystic *pāśa* ropes in the air for binding their victims, will refuse to approach him. Rather, such a faithful soul will at once be taken to the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu by the Viṣṇu-dūtas, whose transcendently beautiful forms are clothed in gorgeous yellowish garments and who each hold a disk, club, conch and lotus in their four hands, resembling Lord Viṣṇu. It is to gain all these benefits that one should certainly fast on this very auspicious and important Ekādaśī, even from water."

When the other Pāṇḍavas heard about the benefits to be gained by following Jyeṣṭha-śukla Ekādaśī, they resolved to observe it exactly as their grandfather Śrīla Vyāsadeva had explained it to their brother, Bhīmasena. All the Pāṇḍavas observed it by refraining from eating or drinking anything, and thus this day is also known as Pāṇḍava Nirjalā Dvādaśī.

Śrīla Vyāsadeva continued, O Bhīmasena, therefore you should observe this important fast to remove all your past sinful reactions. You should pray to the Supreme Personality of God, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this way making your sankalpa declaration, 'O Lord of all the demigods, O Supreme Personality of God, today I shall observe Ekādaśī without taking any water. O unlimited Ananta, I shall break fast on the next day, Dvādaśī.' Thereafter, to remove all his sins, the devotee should honour this Ekādaśī fast with full faith in the Lord and with full control over his senses. Whether his sins are equal in volume to Mount Sumeru or to Mandarācala Hill, if he or she observes this Ekādaśī, the sins that have been accumulated all become nullified and are burned to ashes. Such is the great power of this Ekādaśī.

"O best of human beings, although a person should also give water and cows in charity during this Ekādaśī, if for some reason or other he cannot, then he should give a qualified *brāhmaṇa* some cloth or a pot filled with water. Indeed, the merit achieved by giving water alone equals that gained by giving gold ten million times a day.

"O Bhīma, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has said that whoever observes this Ekādaśī should take a Holy bath, give charity to a worthy person, chant the Lord's Holy names on a *japa-māla*, and perform some kind of recommended sacrifice, for by doing these things on this day one receives imperishable benefits. There is no need to perform any other kind of religious duty. Observance of this Ekādaśī fast alone promotes one to the supreme abode of Śrī Viṣṇu. O best of the Kurus, if one donates gold, cloth, or anything else on this day, the merit one obtains is imperishable.

"Remember, whosoever eats any grains on Ekādaśī becomes contaminated by sin and verily eats only sin. In effect, he has already become a dog-eater, and after death he suffers a hellish existence. But he who observes this sacred Jyeṣṭha-śukla Ekādaśī and gives something in charity certainly achieves liberation from the cycle of repeated birth and death and attains to the supreme abode. Observing this Ekādaśī, which is merged with Dvādaśī, frees one from the horrible sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa*, drinking liquor and wine, becoming envious of one's spiritual master and ignoring his instructions, and continually telling lies.

"Furthermore, O best of beings, any man or woman who observes this fast properly and worships the Supreme Lord Jalaśāyī (He who sleeps on the water), and who on the next day satisfies a qualified *brāhmaṇa* with nice sweets and a donation of cows and money - such a person certainly pleases the Supreme Lord Vāsudeva, so much so that one hundred previous generations in his family undoubtedly go to the Supreme Lord's abode, even though they may have been very sinful, of bad character, and guilty of suicide, etc. Indeed, one who observes this amazing Ekādaśī rides on a glorious celestial airplane (*vimāna*) to the Lord's abode.

"One who on this day gives a *brāhmaṇa* a waterpot, an umbrella, or shoes surely goes to the heavenly planets. Indeed, he who simply hears these glories also attains to the transcendental abode of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Viṣṇu. Whoever performs the *śrāddha* ceremony to the

forefathers on the dark-moon day called *amāvasyā*, particularly if it occurs at the time of a solar eclipse undoubtedly achieves great merit. But this same merit is achieved by him who simply hears this sacred narration - so powerful and so dear to the Lord is this Ekādaśī.

"One should clean his teeth properly and, without eating or drinking, observe this Ekādaśī to please the Supreme Lord, Keśava. On the day after Ekādaśī one should worship the Supreme Personality of God in His form as Trivikrama by offering Him water, flowers, incense, and a brightly burning lamp. Then the devotee should pray from the heart, 'O God of gods, O deliverer of everyone, O Hṛṣīkeśa, master of the senses, kindly bestow upon me the gift of liberation, though I can offer you nothing greater than this humble pot filled with water.' Then the devotee should donate the waterpot to a *brāhmaṇa*.

"O Bhīmasena, after this Ekādaśī fast and donating the recommended items according to his ability, the devotee should feed *brāhmaṇas* and thereafter honour prasādam silently."

Śrīla Vyāsadeva concluded, "I strongly urge you to fast on this auspicious, purifying, sin-devouring Dvādaśī in just the way I have outlined. Thus you will be completely freed of all sins and reach the supreme abode."

*Thus ends the Vṛjāvāsī narration of the glories of Jyeṣṭha-śukla Ekādaśī, or Bhīmaseni-nirjalā Ekādaśī, from the Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

Agni the fire-deity, descends from Lord Viṣṇu through Brahmā, from Brahmā to Angirasa, from Angirasa to Brihaspathi, and from Brihaspathi to Samyu, who was Agni" father. He is the gatekeeper in charge of Nairritti, the south-eastern direction. He is one of the eight material elements, and Parikshit Mahārāja, he is very expert at examining things. He examined Mahārāja Shibi once by turning into a dove (for further information on this incident see Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's Śrīmad Bhagavatam commentary to 1:12:20. Purport.)

Agni is divided into three categories; DavAgni, the fire in wood, JatharAgni, the fire in the digestion in the stomach, and VadavAgni, the fire that creates fog when hot and cold streams mix in for example the ocean. Another name for the fire of digestion is Vrika. It is this powerful fire that resided in Bhima's stomach.

As stated in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (Bhāgavat MahāPurāṇam) 12:13:12 and 15.) the Bhagavat Purāṇam is itself the essence or cream of all VedAnta philosophy (sara-vedAnta-sAram), and the Śrīmad Bhagavatam's unequivocal message is that of full surrender to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the rendering of loving devotional service to Him. Observing Ekādaśī strictly is a great aid in that process, and here Śrīla Vyāsadeva is simply stressing to Bhima the importance of the Ekādaśī vratam.



*Instead of returning with the flowers for Siva worship, Hemamali enjoyed with his wife thus enraging Kuvera*

## Yoginī Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Supreme Lord, I have heard the glories of the Nirjalā Ekādaśī, which occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Jyeṣṭha. Now I wish to hear from You about the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha (June - July). Kindly describe to me all about it in detail, O killer of the Madhu demon."

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then replied, "O king, I shall indeed tell you about the best of all fasting days, the Ekādaśī that comes during the dark part of the month of Āṣāḍha. Famous as Yoginī Ekādaśī, it removes all kinds of sinful reactions and awards supreme liberation.

"O best of kings, this Ekādaśī delivers people who are drowning in the vast ocean of material existence and transports them to the shore of the spiritual world. In all the three worlds, it is the chief of all sacred fasting days. I shall now reveal this truth to you by narrating a history recounted in the Purāṇas.

"The king of Alakāpuri - Kuvera, the treasurer of the demigods - was a steadfast devotee of lord Śiva. He employed a servant named Hemamālī as his personal gardener. Hemamālī, a Yakṣa like Kuvera, was very lustfully attracted to his gorgeous wife, Swarūpavatī, who had large, enchanting eyes.

" Hemamālī's daily duty was to visit Mānasarovara Lake and bring back flowers for his master, Kuvera, with which he would use them in the puja offerings to lord Śiva. One day, after picking the flowers, Hemamālī went to his wife instead of returning directly to his master and fulfilling his duty by bringing the flowers for the puja. Absorbed in loving affairs of a bodily nature with his wife, he forgot to return to the abode of Kuvera.

"O king, while Hemamālī was enjoying with his wife, Kuvera had begun the worship of lord Śiva as normal in his palace and soon discovered that there were no flowers ready to be offered in the midday *pūjā*. The lack of such an important item angered the great demigod even more, and he asked a Yakṣa messenger, 'Why has dirty-hearted Hemamālī not come with the daily offering of flowers? Go find out the exact reason and report back to me in person with your findings.' The Yakṣa returned and told Kuvera, 'O dear lord, Hemamālī is freely enjoying sex with his wife.'

"Kuvera became extremely angry when he heard this and at once summoned lowly Hemamālī before him. Knowing that he had been remiss and dawdling in his duty and exposed as meditating on his wife's body, Hemamālī approached his master in great fear. The gardener first paid his obeisances and then stood before his lord, whose eyes had become red with anger and whose lips trembled in rage. So enraged, Kuvera cried out to Hemamālī, 'O you sinful rascal! O destroyer of religious principles! You are a walking offense to the devas! I therefore curse you to suffer from white leprosy and to become separated from your beloved wife! Only great suffering

is deservedly yours! O lowborn fool, leave this place immediately and betake yourself to the lower planets to suffer!

"And so Hemamālī fell at once from grace in Alakāpurī and became ill with the terrible affliction of white leprosy. He awoke in a dense and fearful forest, where there was nothing to eat or drink. Thus he passed his days in misery, unable to sleep at night due to pain. He suffered in both winter and summer season, but because he continued to worship lord Śiva himself with faith, his consciousness remained purely fixed and steady. Although implicated by great sin and its attendant reactions, he remembered his past life because of his piety.

"After wandering for some time here and there, over mountains and across plains, Hemamālī eventually came upon the vast Himalayan mountain ranges. There he had the wonderful good fortune to come upon the great saint Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi, the best of ascetics, whose duration of life it is said, extends to seven of the days of Brahmā. Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi was seated peacefully at his *āśrāma*, looking as effulgent as a second Brahmā. Hemamālī, feeling very sinful, stood at a distance from the magnificent sage and offered his humble obeisances and choice prayers. Always interested in the welfare of others, Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi saw the leper and called him near, "O you, what sort of sinful deeds have you done to earn this dreadful affliction?"

"Hearing this, Hemamālī replied, 'Dear sir, I am a Yakṣa servant of Lord Kuvera, and my name is Hemamālī. It was my daily service to pick the flowers from the Mānasarovara Lake for my master's worship of Lord Śiva, but one day I was negligent and was late in returning with the offering because I had become overwhelmed with lusty passion for enjoying bodily pleasures with my wife. When my master discovered why I was late, he cursed me in great anger. Thus I am now bereft of my home, my wife and my service. But fortunately I have come upon you, and now I hope to receive from you an auspicious benediction, for I know that devotees such as you are as merciful as the Supreme Lord and always carry the interest of others uppermost in their hearts. That is their nature. O best of sages, please help me!'

"Softhearted Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi replied, 'Because you have told me the truth, I shall tell you about a fast day that will benefit you greatly. If you fast on the Ekādaśī that comes during the dark fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha, you will surely be freed of this terrible curse.' Upon hearing these blessed words from the renowned sage, Hemamālī fell to the ground in complete gratitude and offered him his humble obeisances again and again. But Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi stood there and lifted Hemamālī up, filling him with inexpressible happiness.

"Thus, as the sage had instructed him, Hemamālī dutifully observed the Ekādaśī fast, and by its influence he again became a handsome Yakṣa. Then he returned home, where he lived very happily with his wife."

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa concluded, "So, you can readily see, O Yudhiṣṭhira that fasting on Yoginī Ekādaśī is very powerful and auspicious. Whatever merit one obtains by feeding eighty-eight thousand pious *brāhmaṇas* is also obtained simply by observing a strict fast on Yoginī Ekādaśī. For one who fasts on this sacred Ekādaśī, she destroys heaps of past sinful reactions and makes him most pious. O King, thus I have explained to you the purity of Yoginī Ekādaśī."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Āṣāḍha-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, or Yoginī Ekādaśī, from the Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa.*



*King Mandhata assembled his army and entourage and then, bidding them farewell, entered the forest*

## Padmā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Keśava, what is the name of that Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha (June-July)? Who is the worshipable Deity for the auspicious day, and what is the process for observing this event?"

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "O caretaker of this Earthly planet, I shall gladly tell you a wonderful historical event that the deva Lord Brahmā once narrated to his son Nāradaḥi.

"One day Nārada asked his father, 'What is the name of the Ekādaśī that comes during the light part of the month of Āṣāḍha? 'Kindly tell me how I should observe this Ekādaśī and thus please the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu.'

"Lord Brahmā replied, 'O great saintly orator, O best of all sages, O purest devotee of Lord Viṣṇu, your question is as usual excellent for all mankind. There is nothing better than Ekādaśī, the day of Lord Śrī Hari, in this or any other world. It nullifies even the worst sins if observed properly. For this reason I shall tell you about this Āṣāḍha-śukla Ekādaśī.

'Fasting on this Ekādaśī purifies one of all sins and fulfills all ones desires. Therefore, whoever neglects to observe this sacred fast day is a good candidate for entering into hell. Āṣāḍha-śukla Ekādaśī is also famous as Padmā Ekādaśī. Just to please Hṛṣīkeśa, the master of the senses, one should fast on this day. Listen carefully, O Nārada, as I relate to you a wonderful historical event that was recorded in the scriptures regarding this Ekādaśī. Just hearing this account destroys all kinds of sins, along with all obstacles on the path to spiritual perfection.

'O son, there was once a saintly king in the Sun dynasty whose name was Māndhātā. Because he always stood up for the truth, he was appointed emperor. He took care of his subjects as though they were his very own family members and children. On account of his piety and great religiosity, there was no pestilence, drought, or disease of any kind in his entire kingdom. All his subjects were not only free of all kinds of disturbances but also were very wealthy. The king's own treasury was free of any ill-gotten moneys, and thus he ruled happily for many years.

'Once, however, because of some sin in his kingdom, there was a drought for three years. The subjects found themselves beset by famine also. The lack of food grains made it impossible for them to perform the prescribed Vedic sacrifices, offer oblations to their forefathers and to the devas, engage in any ritualistic worship, or even study the Vedic literatures. Finally, they all came before their beloved king in a great assembly and addressed him thus, 'O king, you always see to our welfare, so we humbly beg your assistance now. Everyone and everything in this world needs water. Without water, almost everything is rendered useless or dead. The Vedas call water *nāra*, and because the Supreme Personality of God sleeps upon water, His another name is Nārāyaṇa. God makes His own abode on water and takes His rest there. In His form as the

clouds, the Supreme Lord is present throughout the sky and pours forth rains, from which grow the grains that maintain every living entity.

“ ‘O king, the severe drought has caused a great lack of valuable grains; thus we are all miserable, and the population is decreasing as people die off or leave your kingdom. O best ruler on Earth, please find some solutions to this problem and bring us to peace and prosperity once again.’”

“ ‘The king replied, "You speak the truth, for grains are like Brahman, the Absolute Truth, who lives within grains and thereby sustains all beings. Indeed, it is because of grains that the entire world lives. Now, why is there a terrible drought in our kingdom? The holy scriptures discuss this subject very thoroughly. If a king (or head of the country) is irreligious, both he and his subjects suffer. I have meditated upon the cause of our problem for a long time, but after searching my past and present character I can honestly say that I find no sin. Still, for the good of all you subjects, I shall try to remedy the situation.’”

Thinking in this way, King Māndhātā assembled his army and entourage. Paid his obeisances to me, and then entered the forest. He wandered here and there, seeking great sages in their *āśramas* and inquiring about how to resolve the crisis in his kingdom. At last he came upon the *āśrama* of one of my other sons, Aṅgirā Muni, whose effulgence lit up all directions. Seated in his hermitage, Aṅgirā looked like a second Brahmā. King Māndhātā was very pleased to see that exalted sages, whose senses were completely under control.

‘The king immediately dismounted his horse and offered his respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of Aṅgirā Ṛṣi. Then the king joined his palms and prayed for the Muni’s blessings. That saintly person reciprocated by blessing the king with sacred mantras; then he asked him about the welfare of the seven limbs of his kingdom.

‘After telling the sage how the seven limbs of his kingdom were situated, King Māndhātā asked the sage about his own situation, and if he was happy. Then Aṅgirā Ṛṣi asked the king why he had undertaken such a difficult journey into the forest, and the king told him of the affliction his kingdom was suffering. The king said, "O great sage, I am ruling and maintaining my kingdom while following the Vedic injunctions, and thus I do not know the reason for the drought. To solve this mystery, I have approached you for help. Please help me relieve the suffering of my subjects.

‘Aṅgirā Ṛṣi said to the king, ‘The present age, Satya yuga, is the best of all ages, for in this age Dharma stands on all four legs. In this age everyone respects *brāhmaṇas* as the topmost members of society. Also, everyone fulfills his occupational duties, and only twice-born *brāhmaṇas* are allowed to perform Vedic austerities and penances. Although this is a standard, O lion among kings, there is one *śudra* who is unlawfully performing the rites of austerity and penance in your kingdom. This is why there is no rain in your land. You should therefore punish this laborer with death, for by so doing you will remove the contamination inflicted by his actions and restore peace to your subjects.

“ ‘The king then replied, "How can I kill an offense-less performer of austerity and sacrifice? Please give me some spiritual solution.”

‘The great sage Aṅgirā said, "O king, you should observe a fast on the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha. This auspicious day is named Padmā Ekādaśī, and by its influence plentiful rains and thus grains and other foodstuffs will surely return to your kingdom. This Ekādaśī bestows perfection upon its faithful observers, removes all kinds of bad elements, and destroys all obstacles on the path to perfection. O king, you, your relatives, and your subjects should all observe this sacred Ekādaśī fast. Then everything in your kingdom will undoubtedly return to normal.”

“ ‘Upon hearing these words, the king offered his obeisances and then returned to his palace. When the Padmā Ekādaśī arrived, King Māndhātā assembled all the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* in his kingdom and instructed them to strictly observe this important fast day. After they had observed it, the rains fell, just as the sage had predicted, and in due course of time there were abundant crops and a rich harvest of grain. By the mercy of the Supreme Lord Hṛṣīkeśa, the master of the senses, all the subjects of King Māndhātā became extremely happy and prosperous.

‘Therefore, O Nārada, everyone should observe this Ekādaśī fast very strictly, for it bestows all kinds of happiness, as well as ultimate liberation, upon the faithful devotee’

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa concluded, "My dear Yudhiṣṭhira, Padmā Ekādaśī is so powerful that one who simply reads or hears its glories becomes completely sinless. O Pāṇḍava, one who wishes to please Me should strictly observe this Ekādaśī, which is also known as Deva-sayani Ekādaśī. O lion among kings, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, whoever wants liberation should regularly observe a fast on this Ekādaśī which is also the day when the Cāturmāsya fast begins.”

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of the Āṣāḍha-śukla Ekādaśī - also known as Padmā Ekādaśī or Deva-sayanī Ekādaśī - from the Bhaviṣya-uttara Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

It is said that three things cannot exist without water; pearls, human beings, and flour. The essential quality of a pearl is its luster, and that is due to water. The essence of a man is his semen, whose main constituent is water. And without water, flour cannot be made into dough and then be cooked into various forms of bread, offered and eaten. Sometimes water is called *jala-nArAyaNa*, the Supreme Lord in the form of this life sustaining substance - water.

The seven limbs of a king’s domain are

1. the king himself;
2. the ministers;
3. his treasury;
4. his military forces;
5. his allies;
6. the *brāhmaṇas*;
7. the sacrificial performances performed in the kingdom and the needs of the subjects under his care.

The four legs of dharma are Truthfulness, Austerity, Mercy, and Cleanliness.

Deva-sayani, or Viṣṇu-sayani, indicates the day when Lord Viṣṇu goes to sleep with all the devas (demigods). It is said that after this day one should not perform any new auspicious ceremonies until Devotthāni Ekādaśī (Haribodhinī (Probodhini) Devotthāni (Utthana) Ekādaśī), which occurs during the month of KArtika (October - November), because the devas (demigods), being asleep, cannot be invited to the sacrificial arena and because the Sun is traveling along its Southern course (Dakshinayanam).



*One who worships Tulasi-devi and offers her leaves and flowers to Krsna pleases Him more than one who worships Him with pearls, rubies, diamonds and sapphires*

## Kāmikā Ekādaśī

**M**ahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira said, "O Supreme Lord, I have heard from You the glories of fasting on Deva-śayanī Ekādaśī, which occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Āṣāḍha. Now I would like to hear from You the glories of the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Śrāvaṇa (July -August). O Govinda, please be merciful to me and explain its glories. O Vāsudeva, I offer my humble obeisances unto You.

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, replied, "O King, please listen attentively as I describe the auspicious influence of this holy fast (vrata) day, which removes all sins. Nārada Muni once asked Lord Brahmā about this same topic. 'O regent of all,' said Nāradaji, 'O you who sit upon a water born lotus throne, please tell me the name of the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the sacred month of Śrāvaṇa. Please also tell me which Deity is to be worshipped on that holy day, the process one must follow to observe it, and the merit it awards.'

Lord Brahmā replied, 'My dear son Nārada, for the benefit of all humanity I shall happily tell you everything you wish to know, for just hearing the glories of the Kāmikā Ekādaśī bestows merit equal to that obtained by one who performs a horse sacrifice. Certainly, great merit is attained by one who worships, and who also meditates on the lotus feet of the four-armed Lord Gadādhara, who holds conchshell, disc, club and lotus in His hands and who is also known as Śrīdhara, Hari, Viṣṇu, Mādhava, and Madhusūdana. And the blessings achieved by such a person / devotee, who worships Lord Viṣṇu exclusively are far greater than those achieved by one who takes a sacred bath in the Ganges at Kāśī (Vārāṇasī), in the forest of Naimiśāraṇya, or at Puṣkara, where I am worshipped. But one who observes this Kāmikā Ekādaśī and also worships Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa achieves greater merit than one who has *darśana* of Lord Kedāranātha in the Himālayas, or one who bathes at Kurukṣetra during a solar eclipse, or one who donates the whole Earth in charity, including its forests and oceans, or one who bathes in the River Gaṇḍakī or the River Godāvāri on a full moon (*purnima*) day that falls on a Monday when Leo and Jupiter are conjoined.

“ Observing Kāmikā Ekādaśī bestows the same merit as donating a milk-cow and her auspicious calf, along with their feed. On this all auspicious day, whosoever worships Lord Śrīdhara-deva, Viṣṇu, is glorified by all the devas, Gandharvas, Pannagas, and Nāgas.

“ Those who are afraid of their past sins and completely immersed in sinful material life should at least observe this best of Ekādaśīs according to their ability and thus attain liberation. This Ekādaśī is the purest of all days and the most powerful for removing sins of the native. O Nārada ji, Lord Śrī Hari Himself once said about this Ekādaśī, "One who fasts on Kāmikā Ekādaśī attains much more merit than one who studies all the spiritual literatures.”

“ Anyone who fasts on this particular day remains awake throughout the night will never experience the anger of Yamarāja, death personified. Whoever observes Kāmikā Ekādaśī will not have to suffer future births, and in the past many *yogīs* who fasted on this day went to the

spiritual world. One should therefore follow in their auspicious footsteps and strictly observe a fast on this Ekādaśī.

'Whosoever worships Lord Śrī Hari with *tulasī* leaves is freed from all implication of sin. Indeed, he lives untouched by sin, as the lotus leaf, although in the water, is untouched by it. Whosoever offers Lord Śrī Hari but a single leaf from the *tulasī* tree attains as much merit as one who gives away in charity two hundred grams of gold and eight hundred grams of silver. The Supreme Personality of God is more pleased by one who offers Him a single *tulasī* leaf than by one who worships Him with pearls, rubies, topaz, diamonds, lapis lazuli, sapphires, *gomedā* stones, cat's eye gems, and coral. One who offers Lord Keśava newly grown *mañjarīs* from the *tulasī* plant gets rid of all the sins he has committed during this or any other lifetime. Indeed, mere *darśana* of *tulasī* on Kāmikā Ekādaśī removes all sins, and merely touching her and praying to her removes all kinds of disease. One who waters *tulasī* devi need never fear the Lord of death, Yamarāja. One who plants or transplants *tulasī* on this days will eventually reside with Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in His own abode. To Śrīmatī Tulasī devi, who awards liberation in devotional service, one should therefore daily offer one's full obeisances.

“ 'Even Citragupta, Yamarāja's secretary, cannot calculate the merit obtained by one who offers Śrīmatī Tulasī-devi a perpetually burning ghee lamp. So dear is this sacred Ekādaśī to the Supreme Personality of God that all the forefathers of one who offers a bright ghee lamp to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa on this day ascend to the heavenly planets and drink the celestial nectar there. Whoever offers a ghee or sesame oil lamp to Śrī Kṛṣṇa on this day is freed from all his sins and enters the abode of Sūrya, the sun-deity, with a body as bright as ten million lamps.

“O Yudhiṣṭhira, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa concluded, "these were the words Lord Brahmā to Nārada Muni concerning the incalculable glories of this Kāmikā Ekādaśī, which removes all sins. This sacred day nullifies even the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa* or the sin of killing an unborn child in the womb, and it promotes one to the spiritual world by making one supremely meritorious. Whoever hears these glories of the Kāmikā Ekādaśī with faith becomes free of all sins and returns home, back to Viṣṇu-loka.

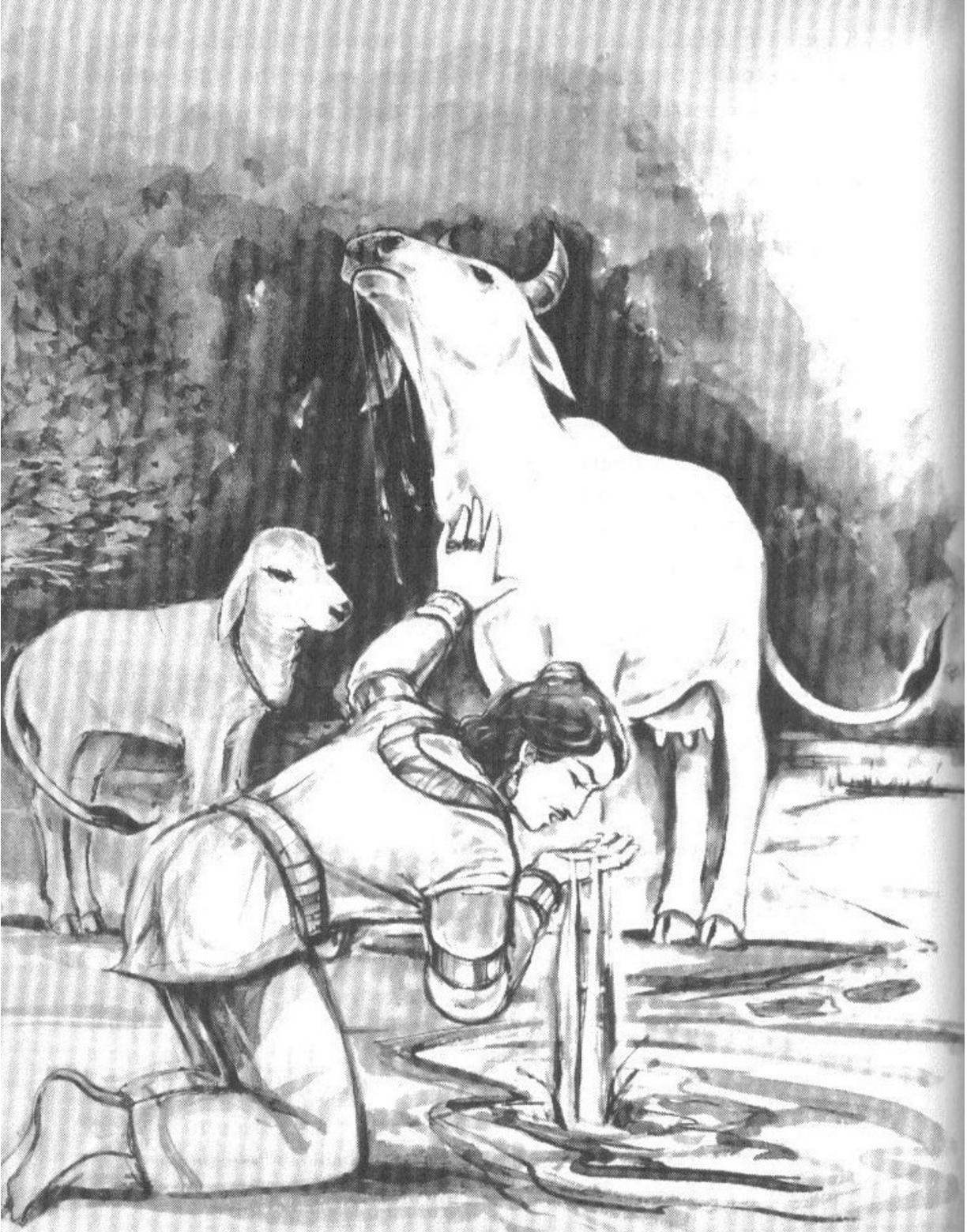
*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of the Śrāvaṇa-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī or Kāmikā Ekādaśī, from the Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

Puškara, which is the only place on the planet where I am formally worshipped.

This Ekādaśī is so powerful that if one who is unable to fast simply follows the practices as mentioned herein, s/he is elevated to the heavenly planets, along with all their forefathers.

One who kills the innocent, i.e., a *brāhmaṇa* (*brāhmaṇa*), a child in the womb, a pious and spotless woman, etc., and then later hears about the glories of Kāmikā Ekādaśī will be relieved of the reaction to one's sins. However, one should NOT think beforehand that one can kill a *Brāhmaṇa* or other innocent folk and then go unpunished simply by hearing of this Ekādaśī. Such knowing commission of sin is an abomination.



*When the cow and her calf started to drink, the merchant rudely shoved them aside and selfishly slaked his own thirst*

## Putradā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Madhūsudana, O killer of the Madhu demon, please be merciful to me and describe to me the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Śrāvaṇa (July-August)." The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, replied, "Yes, O king, I shall happily narrate its glories to you, for just by hearing about this sacred Ekādaśī one attains the merit of performing a horse sacrifice.

"At the dawn of Dvāpara-yuga there lived a king by the name of Mahījita, who ruled the kingdom of Māhīṣmatī-purī. Because he had no son, his entire kingdom seemed utterly cheerless to him. A married man who has no son gains no happiness in this life or the next. For a long time this king tried very hard to obtain an heir, but to no avail. Seeing his years advancing ever onwards, King Mahījita became increasingly anxious. One day he told an assembly of his advisers: 'I have committed no sin in this life, and there is no ill-gotten wealth in my treasury. I have never usurped the offerings to the demigods or *brāhmaṇas*. When I waged war and conquered kingdoms, I followed the rules and regulations of the military art, and I have protected my subjects as if they were my own children. I punished even my own relatives if they broke the law, and if my enemy was gentle and religious I welcomed him. O twice-born souls, although I am a religious and faithful follower of the Vedic standards, still my home is without a son. Kindly tell me the reason for this.'

"Hearing this, the king's *brāhmaṇa* advisers discussed the subject among themselves, and with the aim of benefiting the king they visited the various ashrams of the great sages. At last they came upon a sage who was austere, pure, and self-satisfied, and who was strictly observing a vow of fasting. His senses were completely under control, he had conquered his anger, and he was expert at performing his occupational duty. Indeed, this great sage was expert in all the conclusions of the Vedas, and he had extended his life span to that of Lord Brahmā himself. His name was Lomaśa Ṛṣi, and he knew past, present, and future. After each *kalpa* passed, one hair would fall out of his body. All the king's *brāhmaṇa* advisers very happily approached him one by one to offer their humble respects.

"Captivated by this great soul, King Mahījita's advisers offered obeisances to him and said very respectfully, 'Only because of our great good fortune, O sage, have we been allowed to see you.' "Lomaśa Ṛṣi saw them bowing down to him and replied, 'Kindly let me know why you have come here. Why are you praising me? I must do all I can to solve your problems, for sages like me have only one interest: to help others. Do not doubt this.'

"The king's representatives said, 'We have come to you, O exalted sage, to ask for your help in solving a very serious problem. O sage, you are like Lord Brahmā. Indeed, there is no better sage in the entire world. Our king, Mahījita, is without a son, though he has sustained and protected us as if we were his sons. Seeing him so unhappy on account of being sonless, we have become very sad, O sage, and therefore we have entered the forest to perform severe austerities. By our good fortune we happened upon you. Everyone's desires and activities become successful just by your *darśana*. Thus we humbly ask that you tell us how our kind king can obtain a son.'

"Hearing their sincere plea, Lomaśa Ṛṣi absorbed himself in deep meditation for a moment and at once understood the king's previous life. Then he said, 'Your ruler was a merchant in his past life, and feeling his wealth insufficient, he committed sinful deeds. He traveled to many villages to trade his goods. Once, at noon on the day after the Ekādaśī that comes during the light fortnight of the month of Jyeṣṭha, he became thirsty while traveling from place to place. He came upon a beautiful pond on the outskirts of a village, but just as he was about to drink at the pond a cow arrived there with her new-born calf. These two creatures were also very thirsty because of the heat, but when the cow and calf started to drink, the merchant rudely shoved them aside and selfishly slaked his own thirst. This offense against a cow and her calf has resulted in your king's being without a son now. But the good deeds he performed in his previous life have given him rulership over an undisturbed kingdom.'

"Hearing this, the king's advisers replied, 'O renowned Ṛṣi, we have heard that the Vedas say one can nullify the effects of one's past sins by acquiring merit. Be so kind as to give us some instruction by which our king's sins can be destroyed; please give him your mercy so that a prince will take birth in his family.'

"Lomaśa Ṛṣi said, 'There is an Ekādaśī called Putradā, which comes during the light fortnight of the month of Śrāvaṇa. On this day all of you, including your king, should fast and stay awake all night, strictly following the rules and regulations. Then you should give the king whatever merit you gain by this fast. If you follow these instructions of mine, he will surely be blessed with a fine son.'

"All the king's advisers became very pleased to hear these words from Lomaśa Ṛṣi, and they all offered him their grateful obeisances. Then, their eyes bright with happiness, they returned home.

"When the month of Śrāvaṇa arrived, the king's advisers remembered the advice of Lomaśa Ṛṣi, and under their direction all the citizens of Māhīṣmatī-purī, as well as the king, fasted on Ekādaśī. And on the next day, Dvādaśī, the citizens dutifully offered their accrued merit to him. By the strength of all this merit, the queen became pregnant and eventually gave birth to a most beautiful son.

"O Yudhiṣṭhira," Lord Kṛṣṇa concluded, "the Ekādaśī that comes during the light fortnight of the month of Śrāvaṇa has thus rightfully become famous as Putradā ["bestower of a son"]. Whoever desires happiness in this world and the next should certainly fast from all grains and legumes on this holy day. Indeed, whoever simply hears the glories of Putradā Ekādaśī becomes completely free of all sins, is blessed with a good son and surely ascends to heaven after death."

*Thus ends the Vṛjāvāsī narration of the glories of Śrāvaṇa-śukla Ekādaśī, or Putradā Ekādaśī, from the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

The Sanskrit word for 'son' is *putra*. *Pu* is the name of a particular hell, and *tra* means 'to deliver.' Thus the word *putra* means 'a person who delivers one from the hell named *Pu*.' Therefore every married man should produce at least one son and train him properly; then the father will be delivered from a hellish condition of life. But this

injunction does not apply to the serious devotees of Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, for the Lord becomes their son, father, and mother.

Furthermore, ChANakya Pandita says,

*satyam mata pita jnanam dharmo bhrata daya sakha*

*santih patni ksama putrah sadete mama vandhavah*

"Truth is my mother, knowledge is my father, my occupational duty is my brother, kindness is my friend, tranquility is my wife, and forgiveness is my son. These six are my family members." Among the twenty-six leading qualities of a devotee of the Lord, forgiveness is the topmost. Therefore devotees should make an extra endeavor to develop this quality. Here ChANakya says "forgiveness is my son," and thus a devotee of the Lord, even though he may be on the path of renunciation, may observe this Ekādaśī and pray to attain this kind of "son."

One *kalpa*, or twelve hours of Lord Brahmā, equals 4,320,000,000 years.

Lomasa Ṛṣi had all good qualities because he was a devotee of the Lord. As stated in the Śrīmad-Bhagavatam (5:18:12),

*yasyasti bhaktir bhagavaty akinchana*  
*sarvair gunais tatra samasate surah*  
*harav abhaktasya kuto mahad-guna*  
*manorathenasati dhavato bahih*

"In one who has unflinching devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, all the good qualities of Kṛṣṇa and the demigods are consistently manifest. However, he who has no devotion to the Supreme Personality of God has no good qualifications because he is engaged by mental concoction in material existence, which is the external feature of the Lord."



*King Hariscandra, who had been reduced to slaving in a crematorium, narrated his pitiful tale to Gautama Muni*

## Ajā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Janārdana, protector of all living entities, please tell me the name of the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Bhādrapada (August-September)."

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then replied, "O King, listen to Me attentively. The name of this sin-removing, sacred Ekādaśī is Ajā. Any person who fasts completely on this day and worships Hṛṣīkeśa, the master of the senses, becomes free of all reactions to his sins. Even one who simply hears about this Ekādaśī is freed from his past sins. O King, there is no better day than this in all the earthly and heavenly worlds. This is true without a doubt.

"There once lived a famous king named Hariścandra, who was the emperor of the world and a person of great truth and integrity. His wife's name was Candrāmātī, and he had a son named Lohitāśva. By the force of destiny, however, Hariścandra lost his great kingdom and sold his wife and son. The pious king himself became a menial servant of a dog-eater, who made him guard a crematorium. Yet even while doing such menial service, he did not forsake his truthfulness and good character, just as *soma-rasa*, even when mixed with some other liquid, does not lose its ability to bestow immortality.

"The king passed many years in this condition. Then one day he sadly thought, 'What shall I do? Where shall I go? How can I be delivered from this plight?' In this way he drowned in an ocean of anxiety and sorrow.

"One day a great sage happened by, and when the king saw him he happily thought, 'Ah, Lord Brahmā has created *brāhmaṇas* just to help others.' Hariścandra paid his respectful obeisances to the sage, whose name was Gautama Muni. With joined palms the king stood before Gautama Muni and narrated his pitiful story. Gautama Muni was astonished to hear the king's tale of woe. He thought, 'How has this mighty king been reduced to collecting clothes from the dead?' Gautama Muni became very much compassionate toward Hariścandra and instructed him on the process of fasting for purification.

"Gautama Muni said, 'O king, during the dark fortnight of the month of Bhādrapada there occurs an especially meritorious Ekādaśī named Ajā, which removes all sins. Indeed, this Ekādaśī is so auspicious that if you simply fast on that day and perform no other austerity, all your sins will be nullified. By your good fortune it is coming in just seven days. So I urge you to fast on this day and remain awake through the night. If you do so, all the reactions of your past sins will come to an end. O Hariścandra, I have come here because of your past pious deeds. Now, all good fortune to you in the future!' So saying, the great sage Śrī Gautama Muni immediately disappeared from his vision.

"King Hariścandra followed Gautama Muni's instructions concerning fasting on the sacred day of Ajā Ekādaśī. O Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, because the king fasted on that day, the reactions to his previous sins were completely destroyed at once. O lion among kings, just see the influence of this Ekādaśī fast! It immediately vanquishes whatever miseries one may be suffering as a result of past sinful activities. Thus all Hariścandra's miseries were relieved. Just by the power of this wonderful Ekādaśī, he was reunited with his wife and son, who had died but were now revived. In heaven the demigods began beating on their celestial kettledrums and showering down flowers upon Hariścandra, his queen, and their son. By the blessings of the Ekādaśī fast, he regained his kingdom without difficulty. Moreover, when King Hariścandra left this planet, his relatives and all his subjects too, went with him to the spiritual world.

"O Pāṇḍava, whoever fasts on Ajā Ekādaśī is surely freed from all his sins and ascends to the spiritual world. And whosoever hears and studies the glories of this Ekādaśī achieves the merit gained by performing a horse sacrifice."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Bhādrapada-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, or Ajā Ekādaśī, from the Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa.*



*Bali Maharaja, bound by the serpent rope of Varuna, remained surrendered to Lord Vamandeva*

## Parivartinī Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja asked of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, "What is the name of that Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight (*shukla paksha*) of the month of Bhādrapada (August-September) ? Who is the worshipable Deity for this Ekādaśī, and what merit does one attain in observing it? Kindly reveal all of this to me my Lord."

The Supreme Personality of God Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa addressed His devoted Yudhiṣṭhira as follows, "This Ekādaśī, O Yudhiṣṭhira, is called Vāmana Ekādaśī, and it bestows upon those who observe it both great merit and ultimate liberation from material bondage. Therefore, because it removes all one's sinful reactions, it is also called Jayantī Ekādaśī. Just hearing of its glories frees one from all his past misdeeds. So auspicious is this fast that observing it bestows the same merit as that earned by performing a horse sacrifice. There is no better Ekādaśī than this, because it awards liberation so easily. Thus if one truly desires freedom from the punishing material world, one should fast on Vāmana Ekādaśī.

"While observing this holy fast, a Vaiṣṇava should lovingly worship the Supreme Lord in His form as Vāmandev, the dwarf incarnation, whose eyes are like lotus petals. By doing so, he worships all other Deities as well, including Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, and at death he undoubtedly goes to that abode of Śrī Hari. In all the three worlds there is no fast that is more important to observe. The reason this Ekādaśī is so auspicious is that it celebrates the day when the sleeping Lord Viṣṇu turns over on His other side; thus it is also known as Parivartinī Ekādaśī."

Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira then asked of the Lord, "O Janārdana, please clear up a question I have. How is it that the Supreme Lord sleeps and then turns over on His side? O Lord, when You are asleep what happens to all the other living entities? Please also tell me how You bound the king of the demons, Bali Mahārāja, as well as how one may please the *brāhmaṇas*. How does one observe Cāturmāsya. Kindly be merciful to me and answer these questions."

The Supreme Personality of God Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "O Yudhiṣṭhira, lion among Kings, I will gladly narrate to you an historical event that, simply by hearing, eradicates all one's sinful reactions. "In the Tretā-yuga there once was a king of the name Bali. Though born in a demonic dynasty, he was very devoted to Me. He sang many Vedic hymns to Me and performed the *homa* rituals just to satisfy Me. He respected the twice-born *brāhmaṇas* and engaged them in performing sacrifices daily. This great soul had a quarrel with Indra, however, and eventually defeated him in battle. Bali took over his entire celestial kingdom, which I Myself had given to Indra. Therefore Indra and all the other demigods, along with many great sages, approached Me and complained about Bali Mahārāja. Bowing their heads to the ground and offering many sacred prayers from the Vedas, they worshipped Me along with their spiritual master, Bṛhaspati. Thus I agreed to appear on their behalf as a dwarf Vāmanadev, My fifth incarnation."

King Yudhiṣṭhira asked, "O Lord, how was it possible for You to conquer such a powerful demon in a dwarf's body? Please explain this clearly, for I am Your faithful devotee."

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "Though a dwarf, I was a *brāhmaṇa*, and I approached that pious king Bali to ask him for alms in the form of land. I said, 'O Bali, please give Me just three steps of land in charity. Such a small piece of land will be good as all the three worlds for Me.' Bali agreed to grant My request without lengthy consideration. But as soon as he vowed to give Me the land, My body began to expand into a gigantic transcendental form. I covered the entire Earth with My feet, all the Bhuvarloka with My thighs, the Svarga heavens with My waist, Maharloka with My stomach, Janaloka with My chest, Tapoloka with My neck, and Satyaloka with My head and face. I covered the entire material creation. Indeed, all the planets of the universe, including the Sun and the Moon, were encompassed by My gigantic form."

"Seeing this astonishing pastime of Mine, all the demigods, including Indra and Śeṣa, the king of the snakes, began to sing Vedic hymns and offer prayers to Me. Then I took Bali by the hand and said to him, 'O sinless one, I have covered the whole Earth with one step and all the heavenly planets with the second. Now where shall I place My foot to measure the third step of land you promised Me?'

"Upon hearing this, Bali Mahārāja bowed down in humility and offered Me his head to place My third step. O Yudhiṣṭhira, I placed My foot on his head and sent him all the way to Pātālaloka. Seeing him thus humbled, I became very pleased and told Bali that henceforth I would permanently reside in his palace. Thereafter, on Parivartinī Ekādaśī, which occurs during the light part of the month of Bhādra, Bali, the son of Virocana, installed a Deity form of Me in his residence.

"O king, until Haribodhinī Ekādaśī, which occurs during the light part of the month of Kārtika, I continue to sleep in the ocean of milk. The merit one accumulates during this period is particularly powerful. One should therefore observe Parivartinī Ekādaśī carefully. Indeed, it is especially purifying and thus cleanses one of all sinful reactions. On this day the faithful devotee should worship Lord Trivikrama, Vāmanadeva, who is the supreme father, because on this day I turn over to sleep on My other side.

"If possible, on this day one should give a qualified person some yogurt mixed with rice, as well as some silver, and then remain awake throughout the night. This simple observance will free one of all material conditioning. One who observes this sacred Parivartinī Ekādaśī in the way I have described will surely attain all kinds of happiness in this world and the kingdom of God in the hereafter. One who simply hears this narration with devotion will go to the abode of the demigods and shine there like the Moon itself, so powerful is observance of this Ekādaśī. Indeed, this observance is as powerful as the performance of a thousand horse sacrifices."

*Thus ends the Vṛjāvāsī narration of the glories of Parivartinī Ekādaśī, or Vāmana Ekādaśī, which occurs during the light part of the month of Bhādrapada, from the Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa.*

NOTE:

The next day after Ekadashi is Śrī Vamana Dvadashi: Appearance day of Lord Vamanadev. Ekadashi fast is observed till noon. The fast is broken after noon with Ekadashi prasadam. Next day (Śrī Vamana Dvadashi), observe Lord Vamanadev's appearance by again fasting till noon and by chanting extra Mahamantra japa praying to the Lord for His shelter. Break this fast with joyful feasting of Lord Vamanadev's appearance day mahaprasadam!



*King Indrasena followed Narada Muni's instructions and released his father from the kingdom of Yamaraja*

## Indirā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Madhusūdāna, O killer of the Madhu demon, what is the name of the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Āśvina (September-October)? Please describe its glories to me."

The Supreme Personality of God, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa then replied, "This Holy day is called Indirā Ekādaśī. If a person fasts on this day, all his sins are eradicated and his forefathers who have fallen into hell are liberated. O best of kings, one who simply hears about this sacred Ekādaśī achieves the great merit earned by performing a horse sacrifice.

"In the Satya-yuga there lived a king named Indrasena, who was so powerful that he destroyed all his enemies. His kingdom was called Māhīṣmatī-purī. The glorious and highly religious King Indrasena took good care of his subjects, and therefore he was rich in gold, grains, sons, and grandsons. He was greatly devoted to Lord Śrī Viṣṇu as well. He especially enjoyed chanting My name, calling out 'Govinda! Govinda!' In this way King Indrasena systematically dedicated himself to pure spiritual life and spent much time meditating on the Absolute Truth.

"One day, as King Indrasena happily and peacefully presided over his assembly, the perfect orator, Nārada Muni, was seen descending. White as a conch, shining like the moon, like a jasmine flower, like a lightening bolt, Nārada Muni descending from the sky. He is decorated with matted locks of reddish hair. The king offered Devarṣi Nārada, the saint among the demigods, great respect by greeting him with joined palms, inviting him into the palace, offering him a comfortable seat, washing his feet, and speaking sweet words of welcome. Then Nārada Muni said to Mahārāja Indrasena, 'O king, are the seven limbs of your kingdom prospering? Is your mind absorbed in thinking of how you can properly perform your occupational duty? Are you becoming more and more devoted and dedicated to the service of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Viṣṇu?'

"The king replied, 'By your kind grace, O greatest of sages, everything is quite well. Today, just by your presence all the sacrifices in my kingdom are successful ! Please show me mercy and explain the reason for your kind visit here.'

"Śrī Nārada, the sage among the demigods, then said, 'O lion among kings, listen to my astonishing words. When I descended from Brahmāloka to Yamaloka, Lord Yamarāja praised me very graciously and offered me an excellent seat. As I glorified his truthfulness and wonderful service to the Supreme Lord, I noticed your father in Yamarāja's assembly. Though he had been very religious, because he broke an Ekādaśī fast prematurely, he had to go to the Yamaloka. Your father gave me a message for you. He said, "In Māhīṣmatī lives a king named Indrasena. Please tell him about my situation here - that because of my past sinful deeds I have somehow been forced to reside in Yamarāja's kingdom. Please give him this message from me:

'O son, kindly observe the coming Indirā Ekādaśī and give much in charity so I can go upward to heaven.'

"Nārada continued, 'Just to deliver this message, O king, have I come to you. You should help your father by observing the fast of Indirā Ekādaśī. By the merit you gain, your father will go to heaven.' "King Indrasena asked, 'O great Nāradaji, please be merciful and tell me specifically how to observe a fast on Indirā Ekādaśī, and also tell me during what month and on what day it occurs.'

"Nārada Muni replied, 'O king, please listen as I describe to you the full process of observing the Indirā Ekādaśī. This Ekādaśī occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Āśvina. On Daśamī, the day before Ekādaśī, rise early in the morning, take bath, and then do some service for God with full faith. At noon, bathe again in running water and then offer oblations to your forefathers with faith and devotion. Be sure not to eat more than once on this day and at night sleep on the floor.

"When you awaken on Ekādaśī morning, cleanse your mouth and teeth thoroughly and then with deep devotion for the Lord take this sacred vow: 'Today I shall fast completely and give up all kinds of sense enjoyment. O lotus-eyed Supreme Personality of God, O infallible one, please give me shelter at Your lotus feet.'" At noon, stand before the sacred form of the Śrī Śāligrāma śilā and worship Him faithfully, following all the rules and regulations; then offer oblations to your forefathers. Next, feed qualified *brāhmaṇas* and offer them some charity according to your means. Now take the food you offered to your forefathers, smell it, and then offer it to a cow. Next, worship Lord Hṛṣikeśa with incense and flowers, and finally, remain awake all night near the Deity of Lord Śrī Keśava.

"Early in the morning of the next day, Dvādaśī, worship Śrī Hari with great devotion and invite *brāhmaṇas* to a sumptuous feast. Then feed you relatives, and finally take your meal in silence. O king, if you strictly observe a fast on Indirā Ekādaśī in this way, with controlled senses, your father will surely be elevated to the abode of Lord Viṣṇu.' After saying this, Devarṣi Nārada immediately disappeared.

"King Indrasena followed the great saint's instructions perfectly, observing the fast in the association of his relatives and servants. As he broke his fast on Dvādaśī, flowers fell from the sky. The merit that Indrasena earned by observing this fast released his father from the kingdom of Yamarāja and caused him to attain a completely spiritual body. Indeed, Indrasena saw him rising to the abode of Lord Hari on the back of Garuḍa. Indrasena himself was able to rule his kingdom without any obstacles, and in time when he handed over the kingdom to his son and also went to Vaikuṅṭha.

"O Yudhiṣṭhira, these are the glories of the Indirā Ekādaśī, which occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Āśvina. Whoever hears or reads this narration certainly enjoys life in this world, is freed of all reactions to his past sins, and at the time of death returns home, back to God, where he lives eternally."

*Thus ends the Vrjavāsī narration of the glories of Āśvina-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, or Indirā Ekādaśī, from the Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

The seven limbs of a king's domain being; the king's well being himself, his ministers, his treasury, his military forces, his allies, the brāhmaṇas, the sacrifices performed in his kingdom, and the needs of the king's subjects.

Every living entity is an individual, and individually everyone has to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness to traverse back to home, back to God. As stated in Garuḍa Purāṇa, someone who is suffering in hell cannot practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because this requires some mental peace, which the reactionary tortures of hell make impossible. If a relative of a sinner suffering in hell gives some charity in the name of the sinner, he can leave hell and enter the heavenly planets. But if the sinner's relative observes this Ekādaśī fast for his suffering kinsman, the kinsman goes directly to the spiritual world, as stated in this chapter.



*If a person strictly observes Papankusa Ekadasi, hundreds of his ancestors are taken by Garuda to the spiritual world, where they attain their original, four-armed, transcendental forms*

## Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, O Madhusūdana, what is the name of the Ekādaśī that comes during the light fortnight of the month of Āśvina (September - October)? Please be merciful and disclose this truth to me."

The Supreme Personality of God Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied, "O king, please listen as I explain the glories of this Ekādaśī - Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī - which removes all sins. On this day one should worship the Deity of Padmanābha, the lotus naveled Lord Viṣṇu, according to the rules and regulations. By so doing, one achieves whatever heavenly pleasures one may want in this world, and at last attains liberation from this world thereafter. Simply by offering one's humble obeisances unto Lord Viṣṇu, the rider of Garuḍa, one can achieve the same merit as is gained by performing great penances for a long time restraining and controlling the senses. Although a person might have committed unlimited and abominable sins, he can still escape hellish punishment just by paying his obeisances to Lord Śrī Hari, the taker away of all sin."

"The merits gained by going on pilgrimage to *tīrthas* of this earthly planet can also be achieved simply by chanting the holy names of Lord Viṣṇu. Whosoever chants these sacred names - such as Rāma, Viṣṇu, Janārdana or Kṛṣṇa - especially on Ekādaśī, never sees Yamarāja's abode. Nor does such a devotee who fasts on Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī, which is very dear to Me, see that abode."

"Both the Vaiṣṇava who criticizes Lord Śiva and the Śaivite who criticizes Me certainly go to hell. The merit obtained by performing one hundred horse sacrifices and one hundred Rājasūrya sacrifices is not even equal to one sixteenth of the merit a devotee is able to attain by fasting on Ekādaśī. There is no higher merit one can achieve than that attained by fasting on Ekādaśī. Indeed, nothing in all the three worlds is as pleasing or as able to purify one of accumulated sin as Ekādaśī, the day of the lotus-naveled Lord, Padmanābha.

"O king, until a person observes a fast on the day of Lord Padmanābha named Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī, he remains sinful, and the reactions of his past sinful activities never leave him like a chaste wife. There is no merit in all the three worlds that can match the merit that one gains by observing a fast on this Ekādaśī. Whosoever observes it faithfully never has to see death personified, Lord Yamarāja. One who desires liberation, elevation to the heavens, good health, beautiful women, wealth, and food grains should simply fast on this Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī. O king, neither the Ganges, Gayā, Kāśī, nor Puṣkara, nor even the holy site of Kurukṣetra, can grant as much auspicious merit as this Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī.

"O Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, protector of the earth, after observing Ekādaśī during the daytime, the devotee should remain awake through the night, absorbed in hearing, chanting and serving the lord - for by so doing he easily attains to the Supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu. Not only that, but ten generations of ancestors on his mother's side, ten generations on his father's side, and ten generations on his wife's side are all liberated by a single observance of a fast on this Ekādaśī. All these ancestors attain their original, four armed transcendental Vaikuṅṭha forms. Wearing

yellow garments and beautiful garlands, they ride to the spiritual realm on the back of Garuḍa, the renowned great enemy of the snakes. This is the benediction My devotee earns simply by observing one Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī properly.

"O best of kings, whether one is a child, a youth, or in old age, fasting on Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī frees him from all sins and makes him immune to suffering a hellish rebirth. Whosoever observes a fast on the Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī becomes free of all his sins and returns to the spiritual abode of Lord Śrī Hari. Whosoever donates gold, sesame seeds, fertile land, cows, grain, drinking water, an umbrella, or a pair of shoes on this most auspicious of holy days will never have to visit the abode of Yamarāja, who always punishes the sinners. But if a resident of earth fails to perform spiritual deeds, especially the observance of a fast on days such as Ekādaśī, his breathing is said to be no better, or of as much use as the puffing of a blacksmith's bellows.

"O best of the kings, especially on Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī, even the poor should first bathe and then give some charity according to their means, and perform other auspicious activities in accordance with their ability.

"Whosoever performs sacrifices and benefits the people, or builds public ponds, resting places, gardens, or houses does not suffer the punishments of Yamarāja. Indeed, one should understand that a person must have performed such pious activities as these in the past life if he is long lived, wealthy, of high birth, or free from all diseases. But a person who observes Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī goes to the abode of the Supreme Lord.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa then concluded, "Thus, O saintly Yudhiṣṭhira, I have narrated to you the glories of the auspicious Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī."

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of the Pāpāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī, or Āśvina - śukla Ekādaśī, from the Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa.*



*When Sobhana saw his wife approaching him high on Mandaracala Mountain, he was overwhelmed with joy and called out to her in great happiness*

## Ramā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Janārdana, O protector of all beings, what is the name of the Ekādaśī that comes during the dark fortnight of the month of Kārtika (October - November)? Please impart this sacred knowledge to me.

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa then spoke as follows, "O lion among kings, please listen as I narrate to you. The Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark part of the month of Kārtika is called Ramā Ekādaśī. It is most auspicious, for it at once eradicates the greatest sins and awards one the passage to the spiritual abode. I shall now narrate to you its history and glories.

"There once lived a famous king of the name Mucukunda, who was friendly to Lord Indra, the king of the heavenly planets, as well as with Yamarāja, Varuṇa, and Vibhīṣaṇa, the pious brother of the demon Rāvaṇa. Mucukunda always spoke the truth and constantly rendered devotional service to Me. Because he ruled according to religious principles, there were no disturbances in his kingdom.

"Mucukunda's daughter was named Candrabhāgā, after a sacred river, and the king gave her in marriage to Śobhana, the son of Candrasena. One day, Śobhana visited his father-in-law's palace on the auspicious Ekādaśī day. This visit made Śobhana's wife Candrabhāgā quite anxious, for she knew that her husband was physically very weak and unable to bear the austerity of a day-long fast. She said to him, 'My father is very strict about following Ekādaśī. On Daśamī, the day before Ekādaśī, he strikes a large kettledrum and announces, "Nobody should eat on Ekādaśī, the sacred day of Śrī Hari!

"When Śobhana heard the sound of the kettledrum, he said to his wife, 'O beautiful one, what am I to do now? Please tell me how I can save my life and obey your father's strictness and at the same time satisfy our guests!

"Candrabhāgā then spoke, 'My dear husband, in my father's house nobody - not even the elephants or horses, what to speak of consenting human beings - eats on Ekādaśī. Indeed, none of the animals are given their ration of grains, leaves, or straw - or even water ! - on Ekādaśī, the sacred day of Śrī Hari. So how can you escape fasting? My beloved husband, if you must eat something, then you should leave here at once. Now, with firm conviction decide on what you have to do.'

"Prince Śobhana then said, 'I have decided to fast on the sacred Ekādaśī day. Whatever my fate is, it will surely come to pass.'

"Deciding thus, Śobhana attempted to fast on this Ekādaśī, but he became unbearably disturbed with excessive hunger and thirst. Eventually the sun set in the west, and the arrival of the

auspicious night made all the Vaiṣṇavas very happy. O Yudhiṣṭhira, all the devotees enjoyed worshipping Lord Hari and remaining awake all through night, but Prince Śobhana that night became absolutely unbearable. Indeed, when the Sun rose on the Dwadasi, that Prince Śobhana was dead.

"King Mucukunda observed his son-in-law's funeral, ordering a large stack of wood be assembled for the fire, but he instructed his daughter Candrabhāgā not to join her husband on the funeral pyre. Thus Candrabhāgā, after performing all the purificatory processes and procedures for honouring her deceased husband, continued to live in her father's house.

Lord Kṛṣṇa continued, "O best of the kings, Yudhiṣṭhira, even though Śobhana died because of observing Ramā Ekādaśī, the merit that he accrued enabled him, after his death, to become the ruler of a kingdom high on the peak of Mandarācala Mountain. This kingdom was like a city of the demigods; very lustrous, with unlimited jewels set in the walls of its buildings that gave off light. The pillars were made of rubies, and gold inlaid with diamonds shone everywhere. As King Śobhana sat upon a throne beneath a pure white canopy, servants fanned him with yak-tail whisks. A stunning crown rested upon his head, beautiful earrings adorned his ears, a necklace graced his throat, and bejewelled armllets and bracelets encircled his arms. He was served by Gandharvas (the best of heavenly singers) and Apsarās (celestial dancers). Verily, he resembled a second Indra.

"One day, a *brāhmaṇa* named Somaśarmā, who lived in Mucukunda's kingdom, happened upon Śobhana's kingdom while travelling to various places of pilgrimage. The *brāhmaṇa* saw Śobhana in all his resplendent glory and thought he might be the son-in-law of his own king Muchakunda. When Śobhana saw the *brāhmaṇa* approaching, he immediately rose up from his seat and welcomed him. After Śobhana had paid his respectful obeisances he asked the *brāhmaṇa* about his well-being and about the health and welfare of his (Śobhana's) father-in-law, his wife and all the residents of the city.

"Somaśarmā then said, 'O king, all the residents and subjects are well in your father-in-law's kingdom, and Candrabhāgā and your other family members are also quite well. Peace and prosperity reign throughout the kingdom. But there is one thing, I'm quite astonished to find you here! Please tell me about yourself. Nobody has ever seen such a beautiful city as this! Kindly tell me how you obtained it.'

"King Śobhana then began to tell his story, 'Because I observed the Ramā Ekādaśī, I was given this splendid city to rule over. But for all of its grandeur, it is only temporary. I beg you to do something to correct this deficiency. You see, this is only an ephemeral city, a place of this material world. How may I make its beauties and glories permanent? Kindly reveal this to me by your instructions.

"The *brāhmaṇa* then asked, 'Why is this kingdom unstable and how will it become stable? Please fully explain this to me, and I shall try to help you.'

"Śobhana then answered, 'Because I fasted on the Ramā Ekādaśī without any faith, this kingdom is impermanent. Now hear how it can become permanent. Please return to Candrabhāgā, the

beautiful daughter of King Mucukunda, and tell her what you have seen and understood about this place and about me. Surely, if you, a pure hearted *brāhmaṇa*, tell her this, my city will soon become permanent.'

"Thus the *brāhmaṇa* returned to his city and related the entire episode to Candrabhāgā, who was both surprised and overjoyed to hear this news of her husband. She said, 'O *brāhmaṇa*, is this a dream you have seen, or is it actually a factual thing?'

"Somaśarmā the *brāhmaṇa* replied, 'O Princess, I have seen your late husband face to face in that wonderful kingdom, which resembles a realm of the denizens' of heavens playgrounds. But you former husband has asked me to relate to you that he says that his kingdom is unstable and could vanish into thin air at any moment. Therefore he hope you can find a way to make it permanent.'

"Candrabhāgā then said, 'O sage among the *brāhmaṇas*, please take me to that place where my husband resides at once, for I greatly desire to see him again! Surely I shall make his kingdom permanent with the merit that I have acquired by fasting on every Ekādaśī throughout my life. Please reunite us at once, again. It is said that one who reunites separated persons also obtains very great merit.'

"The humble *brāhmaṇa* Somaśarmā then led Candrabhāgā to Śobhana's effulgent kingdom. Before reaching it, however, they stopped at the foot of Mt. Mandarācala, at the sacred *āśrama* of Vāmadeva. Upon hearing their story, Vāmadeva chanted hymns from the Vedas and sprinkled holy water from his samanya arghya upon Candrabhāgā. By the influence of that great Rṣi's rites, the merit she had accrued by fasting for so many Ekādaśīs made her body transcendental. Ecstatic, her eyes beaming in wonder, Candrabhāgā continued on her journey.

"When Śobhana saw his wife approaching him high on Mount Mandarācala, he was overwhelmed with joy and called out to her in great happiness and jubilation. After she arrived, he seated her on his left side and she said to him, 'O dearest one, please listen as I tell you something that will benefit you greatly. Since I was eight years old I have fasted regularly and with full faith on every Ekādaśī. If I transfer to you all the merit I have accumulated, your kingdom will surely become permanent, and its prosperity will grow and grow until the coming of the great inundation!'

Lord Kṛṣṇa continued, "O Yudhiṣṭhira, in this way Candrabhāgā who was beautifully decorated with the finest ornaments and had an exquisitely transcendental body, at last enjoyed peace and happiness with her husband. By the potency of Ramā Ekādaśī, Śobhana found his kingdom on the peaks of Mt. Mandarācala able to fulfill all his desires and bestow upon him everlasting happiness, like that achieved from the transcendental Kāma-dhenu cow.

"O greatest of kings, I have thus narrated to you the glories of Ramā Ekādaśī that falls in the dark fortnight of the month of Kārtika.

"Anyone who observes sacred Ekādaśī during both the light and the dark fortnight of each month is undoubtedly freed from the reactions to the sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa*. One should not

differentiate between the Ekādaśīs of the light and dark parts of the month. As we have seen, both can award pleasure in this world and liberate even the most sinful and fallen souls. Just as black cows and white cows give equally good quality milk. So the Ekādaśīs of the dark fortnight and the light fortnight award the same high degree of merit and eventually liberate one from the repeated cycle of birth and death. Anyone who simply hears this narration of the glories of the sacred day of Ramā Ekādaśī, is freed from all kinds of sin and attains the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu.

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration for the glories of the sacred Kārtika-kṛṣṇa Ekādaśī, or Ramā Ekādaśī, from the Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa.*



*Lord Brahma said to Narada Muni, "Dear son, O best of the sages, I shall narrate to you the glories of Haribodhini Ekadasi"*

## Haribodhinī Ekādaśī

**L**ord Brahmā said to Nārada Muni, "Dear son, O best of the sages, I shall narrate to you the glories of Haribodhinī Ekādaśī, which eradicates all kinds of sins and bestows great merit, and ultimately liberation, upon the wise persons who surrender unto the Supreme Lord.

"O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, the merits acquired by bathing in the Ganges remain significant only as long as Haribodhinī Ekādaśī does not come. This Ekādaśī, which occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Kārtika, is much more purifying than a bath in the ocean, at a place of pilgrimage, or in a lake. This sacred Ekādaśī is more powerful in nullifying sin than one thousand Aśvamedha sacrifices and one hundred Rājasūya sacrifices."

Nārada Muni, the saint among the demigods inquired, "O father, please describe the relative merits of fasting completely on Ekādaśī, eating supper (without grains or beans), or eating once at midday (without grains or beans)."

Lord Brahmā replied, "If a person eats once at midday on Ekādaśī, the sins of his previous birth are erased, if he eats supper, the sins acquired during his previous two births are removed, and if he fasts completely, the sins accumulated during his previous seven births are eradicated.

"O son, whatever is only rarely achieved within the three worlds is obtained by him who strictly observes Haribodhinī Ekādaśī. A person whose sins equal Mount Sumeru in volume sees them all reduced to nothing if he simply fasts on Pāpahāriṇī Ekādaśī (another name for Haribodhinī Ekādaśī). The sins a person has accumulated over a thousand previous births are burned to ashes if he not only fasts but also remains awake throughout Ekādaśī night, just as a mountain of cotton can be burned to ashes if one lights a small fire in it.

O best of sages, Nāradaji, a person who strictly observes this fast achieves the results I have mentioned. Even if one does a small amount of pious activity on this day, following the rules and regulations, one will earn merit to Mount Sumeru in volume; however a person who does not follow the rules and regulations given in the Scriptures may perform pious activity equal to Mount Sumeru in volume, but he will not earn even a small amount of merit. One who does not chant the Gāyatrī mantra three times a day, who disregards fast days, who does not believe in God, who criticises the Vedic Scriptures, who thinks the Vedas bring only ruination to one who follows their injunctions, who enjoys another's wife, who is utterly foolish and wicked, who does not appreciate any service that has been rendered to him, or who cheats others - such a sinful person can never perform any religious activity effectively. Be he a *brāhmaṇa* or a *śudra*, whoever tries to enjoy another man's wife, particularly the wife of a twice-born person, is said to be no better than a dog-eater.

"O best of the sages, any *brāhmaṇa* who enjoys sex with a widow or a *brāhmaṇa* lady married to another man brings ruin to himself and his family. Any *brāhmaṇa* who enjoys illicit sex will have no children in his next life, and any past merit he may have earned is ruined. Indeed, if such a person displays any arrogance toward a twice-born *brāhmaṇa* or a spiritual master, he loses all his spiritual advancement immediately, as well as his wealth and children.

"These three kinds of men ruin their acquired merits: he whose character is immoral, he who has sex with the wife of a dog-eater, and he who appreciates the association of rogues. Whoever associates with sinful people and visits their homes without a spiritual purpose will go directly to the abode of Lord Yamarāja, the superintendent of death. And if someone eats in such a home, his acquired merit is destroyed, along with his fame, duration of life, children, and happiness.

"Any sinful rascal who insults a saintly person soon loses his religiosity, economic development, and sense gratification, and he at last burns in the fire of hell. Anyone who likes to offend saintly persons, or who does not interrupt someone who is insulting saintly persons, is considered no better than an ass. Such a wicked man sees his dynasty destroyed before his very eyes.

"A person whose character is unclean, who is a rogue or a swindler, or who always finds fault with others does not achieve a higher destination after death, even if he gives charity generously or performs other pious deed. Therefore one should refrain from performing inauspicious acts and perform only pious ones, by which one will acquire merit and avoid suffering.

"However, the sins of one who, after due consideration, decides to fast of Haribodhinī Ekādaśī are erased from one hundred previous lives, and whoever fasts and remains awake overnight on this Ekādaśī achieves unlimited merit and after death goes to the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu, and then thousand of his ancestors, relatives, and descendants also reach that abode. Even if one's forefathers were implicated in many sins and are suffering in hell, they still attain beautifully ornamented spiritual bodies and happily go to Viṣṇu's abode.

O Nārada, even one who has committed the heinous sin of killing a *brāhmaṇa* is freed of all stains on his character by faster on Haribodhinī Ekādaśī and remaining awake that night. The merit that cannot be won by bathing in all the places of pilgrimage, performing a horse sacrifice, or giving cows, gold, or fertile land in charity can easily be achieved by fasting on this holy day and remaining awake throughout the night.

"Anyone who observes Haribodhinī Ekādaśī is celebrated as highly qualified and makes his dynasty famous. As death is certain, so losing one's wealth is also certain. Knowing this, O best of sages, one should observe a fast on this day so dear to Hari - Śrī Haribodhinī Ekādaśī.

"All places of pilgrimage in the three worlds at once come to reside in the house of a person who fasts on this Ekādaśī. Therefore, to please the Lord, who holds a disc in His hand, one should give up all engagements, surrender, and observe this Ekādaśī fast. One who fasts on this Haribodhinī day is acknowledged as a wise man, a true yogi, an ascetic, and one whose senses are truly under control. He alone enjoys this world properly, and he will certainly achieve liberation. This Ekādaśī is very dear to Lord Viṣṇu, and thus it is the very essence of religiosity. Even one observance of it bestows the topmost reward in all the three worlds.

"O Nāradaĵi, whoever fasts on this Ekādaśī will definitely not enter a womb again, and thus faithful devotees of the Supreme God give up all varieties of religion and simply surrender to fasting on this Ekādaśī. For that great soul who honours this Ekādaśī by fasting and remaining awake throughout the night, the Supreme Lord, Śrī Govinda, personally terminates the sinful reactions that soul has acquired by the actions of his mind, body, and words.

"O son, for anyone who bathes in a place of pilgrimage, gives charity, chants the holy names of the Supreme Lord, undergoes austerities, and performs sacrifices for God on Haribodhinī Ekādaśī, the merit thus earned all becomes imperishable. A devotee who worships Lord Madhava on this day with first-class paraphernalia becomes free from the great sins of a hundred lifetimes. A person who observes this fast and worships Lord Viṣṇu properly is freed from great danger.

"This Ekādaśī fast pleases Lord Janārdana so much that He takes the person who observes it back to His abode, and while going there the devotee illuminates then ten universal directions. Whoever desires beauty and happiness should try to honour Haribodhinī Ekādaśī, especially if it falls on Dvādaśī. The sins of one's past hundred births - the sins committed during childhood, youth and old age in all those lifetimes, whether those sins are dry or wet - are nullified by the Supreme Lord Govinda if one fasts on Haribodhinī Ekādaśī with devotion.

Haribodhinī Ekādaśī is the best Ekādaśī. Nothing is unobtainable or rare in this world for one who fasts on this day, for it gives food grains, great wealth, and high merit, as well as eradication of all sin, the terrible obstacle to liberation. Fasting on this Ekādaśī is a thousand times better than giving charity on the day of the solar or lunar eclipse. Again I say to you, O Nāradaĵi, whatever merit is earned by one who bathes in a place of pilgrimage, performs sacrifices, and studies the Vedas is only one then-millionth the merit earned by the person who fasts but one on Haribodhinī Ekādaśī. Whatever merit one has acquired in his life by some pious activities becomes completely fruitless if one does not observe the Ekādaśī fast and worship Lord Viṣṇu in the month of Kārtika. Therefore, you should always worship the Supreme Lord, Janārdana, and render service to Him. Thus you will attain the desired goal, the highest perfection.

"On Haribodhinī Ekādaśī, a devotee of the Lord should not eat in another's house or eat food cooked by a non devotee. If he does so, he achieves only the merit of fasting on a full moon day. Philosophical discussion of Scriptures in the month of Kārtika pleases Śrī Viṣṇu more than if one gives elephants and horses in charity or performs a costly sacrifice. Whoever chants or hears descriptions of Lord Viṣṇu's qualities and pastimes, even if but a half or even a fourth of a verse, attains the wonderful merit derived from giving away a hundred cows to a *brāhmaṇa*. O Nārada, during the month of Kārtika one should give up all kinds of ordinary duties and devote one's full time and energy especially while fasting, to discussing the transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Lord. Such glorification of Śrī Hari on the day so dear to the Lord, Ekādaśī, liberates a hundred previous generations. One who spends his time enjoying such discussions, especially in the month of Kārtika, achieves the results of performing ten thousand fire sacrifices and burns all his sins to ashes.

"He who hears the wonderful narrations concerning Lord Viṣṇu, particularly during the month of Kārtika, automatically earns the same merit as that bestowed upon someone who donates a

hundred cows in charity. O great sage, a person who chants the glories of Lord Hari on Ekādaśī achieves the merit earned by donating seven islands."

Nārada Muni asked his glorious father, "O universal sire, I best of all demigods, please tell me how to observe this most sacred Ekādaśī. What kind of merit does it bestow upon the faithful?"

Lord Brahmā replied, "O son, a person who wants to observe this Ekādaśī should rise early on Ekādaśī morning, during the *brahma-mūhurta* hour (an hour and a half before sunrise until fifty minutes before sunrise). He should then clean his teeth and bathe in a lake, river, pond, or well, or in his own home, as the situation warrants. After worshipping Lord Śrī Keśava, he should listen carefully to the sacred descriptions of the Lord. He should pray to the Lord thus: 'O Lord Keśava, I shall fast on this day, which is so dear to You, and tomorrow I shall honour Your sacred prasadam. O lotus-eyed Lord, O infallible one, You are my only shelter. Kindly protect me.'

"Having spoken this solemn prayer before the Lord with great love and devotion, one should fast cheerfully. O Nārada, whoever remains awake all night on this Ekādaśī, singing beautiful songs glorifying the Lord, dancing in ecstasy, playing delightful instrumental music for His transcendental pleasure, and reciting the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa as records in bona-fide Vedic literature - such a person will most assuredly reside far beyond the three worlds, in the eternal, spiritual realm of God.

"On Haribodhinī Ekādaśī one should worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa with camphor, fruits, and aromatic flowers, especially the yellow agaru flower. One should not absorb oneself in making money on this important day. In other words, greed should be exchanged for charity. This is the process for turning loss into unlimited merit. One should offer many kinds of fruits to the Lord and bathe Him with water from a conchshell. Each of these devotional practices, when performed on Haribodhinī Ekādaśī, is ten million times more beneficial than bathing in all the places of pilgrimage and giving all forms of charity.

"Even Lord Indra joins his palm and offers his obeisances to a devotee who worships Lord Janārdana with first-class agastya flowers of this day. The supreme Lord Hari is very pleased when he is decorated with nice *agastya* flowers. O Nārada, I give liberation to one who devotedly worships Lord Kṛṣṇa on this Ekādaśī in the month of Kārtika with leaves of the bel tree. And for one who worships Lord Janārdana with fresh tulasī leaves and fragrant flowers during this month, O son, I personally burn to ashes all the sins he has committed for then thousand births.

"One who merely sees Tulasī Mahārānī, touches her, mediates on her, narrates her history, offers obeisances to her, prays to her for her grace, plants her, worships her, or waters her lives in the abode of Lord Hari eternally. O Nārada, one who serves Tulasī-devī in these nine ways achieves happiness in the higher world for as many thousands of yugas as there are roots and subroots growing from a mature *tulasī* plant. When a full grown *tulasī* plant produces seeds, many plants grow from those seeds and spread their branches, twigs, and flowers, and these flowers also produce numerous seeds. For as many thousands of *kalpas* as there are seeds produced in this way, the forefathers of one who serves *tulasī* in these nine ways will live in the abode of Lord

Hari.

"Those who worship Lord Keśava with *kadamba* flowers, which are very pleasing to Him, get is mercy and do not see the abode of Yamarāja, death personified. What is the use of worshipping someone else if all desires can be fulfilled by pleasing Lord Hari? For example, a devotee who offers Him *bakula*, *aśoka*, and *pāṭalī* flowers is freed from misery and distress for as long as the sun and moon exist in this universe, and at last he achieves liberation. O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, an offering of kanner flowers to Lord Jagannātha brings as much mercy upon the devotee as that earned by worshipping Lord Keśava for four yugas. One who offers *tulasī* flowers (manjaris) to Śrī Kṛṣṇa during the month of Kārtika receives more merit than can be obtained by donating ten million cows. Even a devotional offering of newly grown sprouts of grass brings with it a hundred times the benefit obtained by ordinary ritualistic worship of the Supreme Lord.

"One who worships Lord Viṣṇu with the leaves of the *samīka* tree is freed from the clutches of Yamarāja, the lord of death. One who worships Viṣṇu during the rainy season with *campaka* or jasmine flowers never returns to the planet earth again. One who worships the Lord with but a single *kumbhī* flower achieves the boon of donating a *pala* of gold (two hundred grams). If a devotee offers a single yellow flower of the *ketakī*, or wood-apple, tree to Lord Viṣṇu, who rides on Garuḍa, he is freed from the sins of ten million births. Furthermore, one who offers Lord Jagannātha flowers and also a hundred leaves anointed with red and yellow sandalwood paste will certainly come to reside in Śvetadvīpa, far beyond the coverings of this material creation.

"O greatest of *brāhmaṇas*, Śrī Nārada, after thus worshipping Lord Keśava, the bestower of all material and spiritual happiness, on Haribodhinī Ekādaśī, one should rise early the next day, bathe in a river, chant *japa* of Kṛṣṇa's holy names, and render loving devotional service to the Lord at home to the best of one's ability. To break the fast, the devotee should first offer some *prasādam* to *brāhmaṇas* and only then, with their permission, eat some grains. Thereafter, to please the Supreme Lord, the devotee should worship his spiritual master, the purest of the Lord's devotees, and offer him sumptuous food, nice cloth, gold, and cows, according to the devotee's means. This will certainly please the Supreme Lord, the holder of the disc.

"Next the devotee should donate a cow to a *brāhmaṇa*, and if the devotee has neglected some rules and regulation of spiritual life, he should confess them before *brāhmaṇa* devotees of the Lord. Then the devotee should offer them some *dakṣiṇā* (money). O king, those who have eaten supper on Ekādaśī should feed a *brāhmaṇa* the next day. That is very pleasing to the Supreme Personality of God.

"O son, if a man has fasted without asking the permission of his priest, or if a woman has fasted without asking her husband's permission, he or she should donate a bull to a *brāhmaṇa*. Honey and yoghurt are also proper gifts for a *brāhmaṇa*. Someone who has fasted from ghee should donate milk, one who has fasted from grains should donate rice, one who has slept on the floor should donate a bedstead with a quilt, one who has eaten on a leaf plate should donate a pot of ghee, one who has remained silent should donate a bell, and one who has fasted from sesame should give gold in charity and feed a *brāhmaṇa* couple with sumptuous food. A man who wants to prevent baldness should donate a mirror to a *brāhmaṇa*, one who has second-hand shoes should donate shoes, and one who has fasted from salt should donate some sugar to a *brāhmaṇa*.

During this month everyone should regularly offer a ghee lamp to Lord Viṣṇu or to Śrīmatī Tulasīdevī in a temple.

"An Ekādaśī fast is complete when one offers a qualified *brāhmaṇa* a gold or copper pot filled with ghee and ghee wicks, along with eight waterpots containing some gold and covered by cloths. One who cannot afford these gifts should at least offer a *brāhmaṇa* some sweet words. One who does so will surely attain the full benefit of fasting on Ekādaśī.

"After offering his obeisances and begging permission, the devotee should eat his meal. On this Ekādaśī, Cāturmāsya ends, so whatever one gave up during Cāturmāsya should now be donated to *brāhmaṇas*. One who follows this process of Cāturmāsya receives unlimited merit, O king of kings, and goes to the abode of Lord Vāsudeva after death. O king, anyone who observes the complete Cāturmāsya without a break attains eternal happiness and does not receive another birth. But if someone breaks the fast, he becomes either a blind man or a leper.

"Thus I have narrated to you the complete process for observing Haribodhinī Ekādaśī. Someone who reads or hears about this achieves the merit earned by donating cows to a qualified *brāhmaṇa*."

*Thus ends the Vṛjāvāsī narration of the glories of Kārtika-śukla Ekādaśī - also known as Haribodhinī Ekādaśī or Devotthānī Ekādaśī - from the Skanda Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

It has four names: Haribodhinī - Prabodhini - Devotthānī - Utthana Ekādaśī and it is the second Ekādaśī (Kārtik śukla, light fortnight) in the month of Kārtik.



*Pleased with Padmini for observing Ekadasi, Lord Kesava appeared before her and King Kartavirya, riding on the back of Garuda*

## Padminī Ekādaśī

**S**ūta Gosvāmi said, "Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, O Janārdana, what is the name of the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the extra, leap year month? How does one observe it properly? Please narrate all this to me.'

"The Supreme Personality of God, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, replied, 'O Pāṇḍava, the meritorious Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the extra month of leap-year is called Padminī. It is very auspicious. The fortunate soul who observes it with great determination and faith will return to My personal abode. This extra-month Ekādaśī is as powerful as I am in nullifying sins. Even four-headed Lord Brahmā cannot glorify it sufficiently. Long ago Lord Brahmā told Nārada about this liberating, sin-removing Ekādaśī.'

"Lotus-eyed Lord Kṛṣṇa became very pleased by the enquiry of Yudhiṣṭhira and spoke to him the following pleasing words: 'O king, please listen carefully as I narrate to you the process of fasting on Padminī Ekādaśī, which is rarely done even by great sages.

"One should begin his fast on the Daśamī, the day before Ekādaśī, by not eating any *urad dāl*, pink *dāl*, chickpeas, spinach, honey, or sea salt, and also by not dining in homes of others or off bell-metal plates. These eight things should be avoided. One should eat only once on the Daśamī, sleep on the ground and remain celibate. On Ekādaśī the devotee should rise early in the morning but should not brush his teeth. Then he should thoroughly bathe - in a place of pilgrimage, if possible. While chanting sacred hymns from the Vedas, he should smear his body with cow dung mixed with clay, sesame-seed paste, *kuśa* grass, and the powder of *āmalakī* fruits. Then the devotee should take another thorough bath, after which he should chant the following prayers:

"O sacred clay, you have been created by Lord Brahmā, purified by Kaśyapa Muni, and lifted by Lord Kṛṣṇa in His form as Varāha, the boar incarnation. O clay, please purify my head, eyes, and other limbs. O clay, I offer my obeisances unto you. Kindly purify me so I may worship the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari. "

"O cow-dung, you possess medicinal and antiseptic qualities because you have come directly from the stomach of our universal mother, the cow. You can purify the entire planet Earth. Please accept my humble obeisances and purify me. ""O *āmalakī* fruits, please accept my humble obeisances. You have taken your birth from the saliva of Lord Brahmā, and thus by your very presence the entire planet is purified. Kindly cleanse and purify my bodily limbs. "

"O Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, O God of the gods, O master of the universe, O holder of the conch, disc, club, and lotus, please allow me to bathe in all the holy places of pilgrimage."

"Reciting these excellent prayers, chanting *mantras* to Lord Varuṇa, and meditating on all the places of pilgrimage located on the banks of the Ganges, one should bathe in whatever body of water is at hand. Then, O Yudhiṣṭhira, the devotee should rub his body, thus purifying his mouth,

back, chest, arms, and waist as a prelude to worshipping the Supreme Lord, who wears brilliant yellow garments and gives pleasure to all creatures. By so doing, the devotee will destroy all his sins. Afterwards, he should chant the sacred Gāyatrī mantra, offer oblations to his forefathers, and then enter a Viṣṇu temple to worship Lord Nārāyaṇa, the husband of the Goddess of Fortune, Laxmi-devi.

"If possible, the devotee should then fashion *mūrtīs* of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa or Śiva and Pārvatī out of gold and offer them nice devotional worship. He should fill a copper or clay pot with pure water mixed with scents, and then he should cover the pot with a cloth lid and a gold or silver lid, in this way preparing an *āsana* upon which the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa or Śiva-Pārvatī *mūrtīs* may sit for worship. According to capacity, the devotee should then worship these *mūrtīs* with fragrant incense, a bright ghee lamp, and sandalwood paste along with camphor, musk, *kuṅkuma* and other scents, as well as selected aromatic flowers like white lotuses and other seasonal blooms, and also very nicely prepared foods. On this special Ekādaśī the devotees should dance and sing ecstatically before the Deity. He should avoid *prajalpa* (talking unnecessarily of ordinary, mundane conversational topics) at all costs and should not talk to or touch low-born persons or a woman in her menstrual period, or others so absorbed. On this day he should be especially careful to speak the truth and certainly not criticize anyone before the Deity of Lord Viṣṇu, the *brāhmaṇas*, or the spiritual master. Rather, with other devotees he should be absorbed in listening to Vaiṣṇavas read the glories of Lord Viṣṇu from the Purāṇas. One should not drink or even touch water to his lips on this Ekādaśī, and one who is unable to perform this austerity should drink only water or milk. Otherwise, the fast is considered broken. One should remain awake that Ekādaśī night, singing and playing musical instruments for the transcendental pleasure of the Supreme Person.

"During the first quarter of the Ekādaśī night the devotee should offer some coconut meat to his worshippable *mūrtī*, during the second part he should offer soothing *bel* fruit, during the third part an orange, and as the night draws to a close some betel nut. Remaining awake during the first part of the Ekādaśī night bestows on the devotee the same merit as that gained by performing the Agnistoma-yajña. Staying awake during the second part of the night bestows the same merit as that gained by performing a Vājapeya-yajña. Stay awake during the third part gives one the same merit as that attained by performing an Aśvamedha-yajña. And one who remains awake throughout the night receives all of the above mentioned merit, as well as the grand merit of having performed a Rājasūrya-yajña. Thus there is no better fasting day in the year than Padminī Ekādaśī. Nothing can compare to it as a giver of merit, whether it be a fire sacrifice, knowledge, education, or austerity. Indeed, whoever observes this sacred Ekādaśī fast receives all the merit attained by bathing in all the places of pilgrimage in the world.

"After remaining awake throughout the night, the devotee should bathe at sunrise and then worship Me nicely. He should then feed a qualified *brāhmaṇa* and respectfully give him the *mūrtī* of Lord Keśava and the pot filled with pure scented water. This gift will guarantee the devotee success in this life and liberation in the hereafter.

"O sinless Yudhiṣṭhira, as you have requested, I have described the rules and regulations, as well as the benefits, regarding the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the extra, leap-year month. Fasting on this Padminī day bestows merit equal to that gained by fasting on all other

Ekādaśī. The Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark part of the extra month, which is known as Paramā Ekādaśī, is as powerful at removing sin as this one, Padminī. Now please listen to Me carefully as I narrate to you a fascinating account connected with this sacred day. Pulastya Muni once recited this history to Nāradaĵi.

"Pulastya Muni once had occasion to rescue the ten headed demon Rāvaṇa from the prison of Kārtavīryārjuna, and upon hearing of this event Nārada Muni asked his friend, "O greatest of sages, since this Rāvaṇa defeated all the demigods, including Lord Indradev, how could Kārtavīryārjuna defeat Rāvaṇa, who was so skilled in battle?"

"Pulastya Muni replied, "O great Nārada, during the Tretāyuga, Kārtavīrya (Kārtavīryārjuna's father) took birth in the Haihaya dynasty. His capital city was Māhiṣmatī and he had one thousand queens, whom he loved very dearly. None of them, however, was able to give him the son he wanted so badly. He performed sacrifices and worshipped the demigods and forefathers, but due to the curse of some sage he was unable to beget a son - and without a son, a king cannot enjoy his kingdom, just as a hungry man can never really enjoy his senses.

""King Kārtavīrya carefully considered his plight and then decided to perform severe austerities to achieve his goal. Thus he donned a loincloth made of bark, grew matted locks, and turned over the reins of his kingdom to his ministers. One of his queens, Padminī - who was born in the Ikṣvāku dynasty, who was the best of all women, and who was the daughter of King Hariścandra - saw the king leaving. She felt that, since she was a chaste wife, her duty was to follow in the footsteps of her beloved husband. Removing all the regal ornaments from her beautiful body and donning but one piece of cloth, she thus followed her husband into the forest.

""At last Kārtavīrya reached the summit of Mount Gandhamādana, where he performed severe austerities and penances for ten thousand years, meditating and praying to Lord Gadādhara, who wields a club. But still he did not get a son. Seeing her dear husband waste away to mere skin and bone, Padminī thought of a solution to the problem. She went to the chaste Anasūyā. With great reverence, Padminī said, 'O great lady, my dear husband, Kārtavīrya, has been performing austerities for the last ten thousand years, but Lord Keśava, who alone can remove one's past sins and present difficulties, has not yet become pleased with him. O most fortunate one, please tell me a fast day we can observe and thus please the Supreme Lord with our devotion, so much so that He will bless me with a nice son who will later rule the world as emperor.'

""Upon hearing the appealing words of Padminī, who was very chaste and deeply devoted to her husband, the great Anasūyā replied to her in a very cheerful mood: 'O beautiful, lotus-eyed lady, usually there are twelve months in a year, but after every thirty-two months an extra month is added, and the two Ekādaśīs that occur during this month are called Padminī Ekādaśī and Paramā Ekādaśī. They fall on the Dvādaśīs of the light and dark part of the month, respectively. You should fast on these days and remain awake throughout the night. If you do so, the Supreme Personality of God, Śrī Hari, will bless you with a son.'

""O Nārada, in this way Anasūyā, the daughter of the sage Kardama Muni, explained the potency of these special Ekādaśīs. Hearing this, Padminī faithfully followed the instructions to fulfill her desire for a son. Padminī fasted completely, even from water, and remained awake all

night, chanting the glories of God and dancing in ecstasy. Lord Keśava thus became most pleased with her devotion and appeared before her, riding on the back of the great Garuḍa. The Lord said, 'O beautiful one, you have greatly pleased Me by fasting on the special Ekādaśī of the extra month. Please ask Me for a benediction.'

""Hearing these sublime words from the overseer of the entire universe, Padminī offered the Supreme Lord devotional prayers and asked Him for the boon her husband desired. Lord Kṛṣṇa was moved to reply, 'O gentle lady, I am very happy with you, for there is no month dearer to Me than this, and the Ekādaśīs that occur during this month are the most dear to Me of all Ekādaśīs. You have followed My devotee Anasūyā's instructions perfectly, and therefore I shall do what will please you. You and your husband will have the desired son that you wish.'

""The Lord, who removes the distress of the world, then spoke to King Kārtavīrya: 'O King, please ask of Me any boon that will fulfill your heart's desire, for your dear wife has pleased Me greatly with her devotional fasting.'

""The king was very happy to hear this. Naturally he asked for the son he had desired for so long: 'O master of the universe, O killer of the Madhu-demon, kindly grant me a son who will never be conquered by the demigods, human beings, snakes, demons, or hobgoblins, but whom only You can defeat.' The Supreme Lord immediately replied, 'So be it!' and disappeared.

""The king became so very pleased with his wife and returned to his palace in her company. Padminī soon became pregnant, and the mighty-armed Kārtavīryārjuna appeared as her son. He was the mightiest person in all the three worlds, and thus even the ten-headed Rāvaṇa could not defeat him in battle. Except for Lord Nārāyaṇa, who holds a club, a disc, and other symbols in His hands no one could overcome him. By the merit that resulted from his mother's strict and faithful observance of Padminī Ekādaśī, he could defeat even the dreaded Rāvaṇa. This is not at all surprising, O Nāradaḥ, for Kārtavīryārjuna was the fulfillment of the benediction of the Supreme Personality of God." With these words, Pulastya Muni departed.'

"The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, concluded, 'O sinless Yudhiṣṭhira, as you have enquired from Me, I have explained to you the power of this special Ekādaśī. O best of kings, whoever observes this fast will surely attain to My personal abode. And similarly, if you want all your desires fulfilled, you should do likewise.'

"Hearing these words from the mouth of his beloved Keśava, Dharmarāja (Yudhiṣṭhira) became filled with joy, and when the time came he faithfully observed Padminī Ekādaśī."

Sūta Gosvāmi concluded, "O sage Śaunaka, I have explained to you all about this meritorious Ekādaśī. Anyone who devotedly fasts on the Ekādaśīs that occur during the extra, leap-year months, carefully following all the rules, becomes glorious and happily goes back to God. And one who merely hears or reads about these Ekādaśīs will also obtain great merit and ultimately enter the abode of Lord Śrī Hari."

*Thus ends the Vṛjāvāsī narration of the glories of Padminī Ekādaśī, the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light fortnight of the extra, leap-year month, from the Skanda Purāṇa.*





*The prince gave Sumedha and Pavitra a beautiful, exquisitely furnished house to live in, along with an entire village for their livelihood*

## Paramā Ekādaśī

**Y**udhiṣṭhira Mahārāja said, "O Supreme Lord, what is the name and character of that Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the extra, leap year month. Also, O master of all the universes, what is the process for observing it properly? Kindly narrate all of this to me?"

The Supreme Personality of God, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, replied, "O Yudhiṣṭhira, this meritorious day is called Paramā Ekādaśī. It bestows the great benediction of an enjoyable life and ultimate liberation, release from birth and death. The process for observing it is similar to that for observing the Ekādaśī that occurs during the light part of this month of Kārtika. That is to say, on this Ekādaśī one should worship Me, the best of all living beings, with full love and devotion. In this connection I will now tell you a wonderful history, just as I heard it from the great sage in the city of Kāmpilya.

"Once a very pious *brāhmaṇa* named Sumedhā resided in Kāmpilya with his wife, Pavitrā, who was extremely chaste and devoted to her husband. On account of having committed some sin in his previous life, Sumedhā was without any money or food grains, and even though he begged many people for food, he could not obtain any substantial amount. He hardly had adequate food, clothing, or shelter for himself and his beautiful young wife, who was of such excellent character that she continued to serve Sumedhā faithfully despite their poverty. When guests would come to their home, Pavitrā mataji would give them her own food, and although she often went hungry, her beautiful, lotuslike face never faded. This fasting made her weak, but her affection for Sumedhā remained unbreakable.

"Seeing all this, and lamenting his bad luck, Sumedhā one day said to Pavitrā, 'My dear wife, O most beautiful one, I beg alms from the rich but receive scarcely a scrap. What am I to do? What possible relief is there for our plight? Where should I go for relief? O most obedient and loving wife, without enough wealth, household affairs are never successful. Therefore please permit me to go abroad and attain some wealth. If I make such an effort, I shall certainly obtain whatever fortune I am destined to enjoy. Without making some endeavour a person cannot satisfy his desires or meet his needs. Thus wise men have said that enthusiastic endeavour is always auspicious.'

"Upon hearing this from her husband as he spoke these words, Pavitrā joined her palms and, her eyes brimming with tears, spoke to him with great respect and affection: 'I think there is no one greater or more learned than you, my dear. One who, though in misery, is interested in the welfare of others speaks just as you have. However, the scriptures state that whatever wealth a person attains in his life is due to his having given charity in previous lives, and that if one has not given charity in previous lives, then even though he may sit atop a mound of gold as big as Mount Sumeru, he will still remain poor. Whatever charity a person gives in the form of education, money, fertile land, and the like is returned to him in a future lifetime. We gain what we have given, when given with a good heart. Indeed, whatever the Lord of destiny, the creator,

has written as one's fortune will certainly come to pass. No one attains any wealth without having given in charity in his previous life. O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, since we are now poor, in our previous lives neither you nor I must have given any/sufficient charity to worthy persons. Therefore, O gracious husband, you should remain here with me. Without you I cannot live even a moment.

"Bereft of her husband, a woman is not welcomed by her father, mother, brother, father-in-law, or any other family members. Everyone will say, "You have lost your husband; you are bad luck/fortune personified!" In this way I shall be criticised severely! 'Please, therefore, stay with me and be satisfied with whatever wealth we get. Whatever is destined, we shall obtain in due course of time and enjoy here in perfect happiness.'

"Hearing these plaintive words from his wife, Sumedhā decided to remain in their native village. One day the great sage Kauṇḍinya arrived at their place, and upon seeing him the *brāhmaṇa* Sumedhā and his wife stood up before him and then offered him their respectful obeisances. With his head bowed, Sumedhā welcomed him: 'We are very fortunate to behold you here today, O wisest of sages. My life has become successful, and I am much obliged to you.'

"Sumedhā offered Kauṇḍinya Muni a comfortable seat and highly praised his austerities and learning. 'Just by having your *darshan* today,' said Sumedhā, 'I have become very fortunate.' The poor *brāhmaṇa* couple fed the sage as sumptuously as they could afford to according to their means, and afterwards Pavitrā asked the mendicant, 'O most learned one, what process can we follow to be relieved of our poverty? How can a person who has not given anything in charity in his previous life get a good family, much wealth, and a fine education in this life? My husband wants to leave me here and go abroad to beg alms, but I have earnestly prayed to him to stay here with me. I humbly told him that if one lacks wealth in the present life, it is because of not having given sufficient charity in previous lifetimes. And so he has consented to remain here. It is only due to my great fortune that you have so mercifully come here today. Now we are certain to see the end of our poverty very soon.

"O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, please tell us how we can be free of this perpetual misery brought on by poverty. O merciful one, kindly describe some means - a place of pilgrimage we may visit, a day of fasting we may observe, or an austerity we may perform - by which our ill fortune will end forever.'

"Hearing this sincere supplication from the patient lady, the great sage Kauṇḍinya reflected silently for a moment and then said, 'There is a fast day very dear to the Supreme Personality of God, Lord Hari. Fasting on this day nullifies all kinds of sins and removes all miseries caused by poverty. This fast day, which occurs during the dark part of the extra, leap-year month, is known as Paramā Ekādaśī. It is the topmost day of Lord Viṣṇu, hence the name Paramā. This extra month, dark fortnight Ekādaśī bestows all the necessities of life, such as money and food grains, and at last gives liberation/release. When the evening of this day comes, one should begin singing the glories of the Lord and dancing in ecstasy, and one should continue through the entire night.

"This holy fast was once observed faithfully by Lord Kuvera. When Lord Śiva saw how strictly he had fasted, Śiva became very pleased and made Kuvera the treasurer of heaven. Also, king Hariścandra fasted on this Ekādaśī after his dear wife and son had been sold, and the king was able to get them back. Thereafter he ruled his kingdom with no further impediments. Therefore, O broad-eyed lady, you also should observe the sacred fast of Paramā Ekādaśī, following all the appropriate rules and regulations and remaining awake all night."

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa continued, "O Yudhiṣṭhira, son of Pāṇḍu, in this way Kauṇḍinya Muni mercifully and affectionately instructed Pavitrā about the Paramā Ekādaśī fast. Then he said to Sumedhā, 'On the Dvādaśī, the day after Ekādaśī, you should vow to observe Pañcharātriḱa fasting according to all the rules and regulations. After taking a bath early in the morning, you and your good wife, along with both your parents and hers, should fast for five days according to your ability. Then you will all become eligible to return home, to the abode of Lord Viṣṇu.

"A person who simply makes use of only one seat during these five days goes to the heavenly planets. Whoever feeds qualified *brāhmaṇas* nicely on these five days has in effect fed all the demigods, all human beings, and even all the demons. Whoever donates a pot of drinking water to a twice born *brāhmaṇa* during this five-day period will gain merit equal to that gained by donating the entire planet in charity. Anyone who gives a learned person a pot filled with sesame seeds resides in heaven for as many years as there are seeds in the pot. One who donates a pot filled with golden ghee will surely go to the abode of the sun god after fully enjoying the pleasures of this earthly planet. Whoever remains celibate during these five-days will attain celestial happiness and enjoy with the maidens of Indraloka. Therefore both of you - Sumedhā and Pavitrā - should fast during these five days of Pañcharātriḱa in order to be rewarded with ample grains and wealth for the rest of your lives on this planet. The spiritual world will be your abode thereafter.'

"Hearing this sublime advice, the *brāhmaṇa* couple, Sumedhā and Pavitrā, properly observed the Paramā Ekādaśī and the fast of Pañcharātriḱa, and very soon thereafter they beheld a handsome prince approaching them from the royal palace. On the orders of Lord Brahmā, the prince gave them a beautiful, exquisitely furnished house and invited them to live in it. Praising their austerity and patience, he also gave them an entire village for their livelihood. Then he returned to the palace. Thus Sumedhā and his wife enjoyed all kinds of facilities in this world and at last went to the abode of Lord Viṣṇu.

"Anyone who observes a fast on Paramā Ekādaśī and also the fast of Pañcharātriḱa is freed from all his sins, and after enjoying life he returns to Viṣṇuloka, as did the *brāhmaṇa* Sumedhā and his faithful wife, Pavitrā. It is impossible, O Yudhiṣṭhira, to calculate the extent of the merit one obtains by fasting on Paramā Ekādaśī, for such an observance is equal to bathing in places of pilgrimage such as Puṣkara Lake and the Ganges river, giving cows in charity, and performing all sorts of other religious activities. One who fasts on this day has also completed the offerings of oblations to his forefathers in Gayā. He has, in effect, fasted on all other auspicious days.

"As in the social order the *brāhmaṇa* are considered the best, as amongst four-legged creatures the cow is best, and as among demigods Lord Indra is the best, so among all months the extra month of leap-year is the best. The Pañcharātriḱa fast - the fast of five days in the extra, leap

year month - is said to remove all kinds of abominable sins. But the Pañcharātrika fast, together with the fasts of Paramā and Paramāi Ekādaśī, destroys all a person's sins. If a person is unable to fast on these days, he should observe the fasts during the extra month according to his ability. A person who, having received a human birth, does not take a proper bath during this extra month and then observes these Ekādaśīs, which are very dear to Lord Hari, commits suicide and suffers in the cycle of 8,400,000 species. The rare human birth is meant for accumulating merit and at last achieving liberating release from this material world. Therefore one should by all means observe fasting on this auspicious Paramā Ekādaśī."

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa concluded, "O sinless Yudhiṣṭhira, as you have requested, I have described to you the wonderful merit one can attain by fasting on the Ekādaśī named Paramā, which occurs during the dark part of the extra, leap-year month. You should observe this fast if at all possible."

King Yudhiṣṭhira did exactly as Lord Kṛṣṇa had instructed, and so did all his brothers and their wife, Draupadi. After enjoying pleasures rarely achieved in the material world, they returned home, back to God. Whoever, after taking a proper bath, observes a fast on these two extra-month Ekādaśīs will go to heaven and finally attain to the abode of Śrī Viṣṇu, and as he travels there he will be praised and prayed to by all the demigods.

*Thus ends the Vṛjavāsī narration of the glories of Paramā Ekādaśī, the Ekādaśī that occurs during the dark fortnight of the extra, leap-year month, from the Skanda Purāṇa.*

#### Notes

The revealed scriptures declare, *udyoginah siNghan upaiti laxmi daivena deyati kA purushAh vadantii*: "One who endeavours enthusiastically will certainly attain success, but one who merely says, 'I accept my lot in life' is a lazy man".

*purva-janmArjitaM vidyA purva-janmArjitaM dhanam purva-janmArjitaM kanyA agre dhAvati dhAvatiH* "Transcendental knowledge, spiritual education, satisfying wealth, and pleasing family members are acquired by a person who has given profuse charity. Whatever good a person does returns to him many fold." In *Manu-nitii*, Manu Mahārāja says, *bhAgyaM phalanti sarvatra na cha vidyA na cha paurusham*: "Whatever is predestined by *ViddhAtA*, the fortune-maker, will surely happen. One's so called good education, skill, and enthusiasm will not necessarily guarantee to bring one success."

The Nitii-shastras says, *vināshraye na tishthanti paNDitAH vanitA latAH*: "Without proper shelter and support, the following three things cannot survive; a learned man/*brāhmaṇa*, a woman, and a creeper." Therefore the modern women's liberation movement is a total failure. Furthermore, the Garuḍa Purāṇa states, *pati dharma pati sargaH pati hi paRāmaM tapaH patiri pritim Apanne priiyante sarva devata* "A chaste woman always thinks that pleasing her spiritually situated husband is her heavenly pleasure, utmost duty, and greatest austerity. If her husband is pleased (as *Kulottama*, Viṣṇu personified), she thinks the Supreme lord and all the demigods are pleased. The Supreme Lord includes all the *devatas* (demigods)."

## Biography of the Author

Mahāmandelswar Mahant Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarām Swāmi

Mahāmandelswar Mahant Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarām Swami appeared in a family of pure Gauḍa-Brāhmaṇa Vaiṣṇavas, which specialized in the Yajur Veda, on July 1, 1956, in Nandagram in Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma, and given the name Balarām. His gotra or blood-line descends from the progenitor Kaśyapa Muni (one of seven spiritually conceived sons of the first created being in this universe, Lord Brahmā). He was the eldest of five sons of the renowned Sanskrit scholar, astrologer and spiritual master Śrī Hare Krishna Pāṇdeya Sharma, and thereby acquiring the necessary spiritual guidance from childhood.

At an early age Balarām Sharma so was fluent in Sanskrit that he memorized the whole of the Bhagavad Gītā's 700 verses along with those from the *Amora-kośa* dictionary which deals with many schools of Vedic thought.

He was educated at Vṛndāvana's Nimbarka Sanskrit Mahāvīdyalaya and later transferred to an English medium college to gain sufficient proficiency in the international language which would prove his worth as a preacher of the highest calibre to the whole world.

After receiving initiation from His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, the world's greatest authority on *sanātana-dharma* or Vedic science of spirituality in modern times, in 1975 he was given the *dīkṣa* or initiating name Kṛṣṇa Balarām Das. Kṛṣṇa Balarām Das, thereafter, began his illustrious career as one of India's greatest proponents of spirituality. Subsequent years saw him spreading the mission of his spiritual master around the world. He accepted *sanyāsa* or the renounced order of life at the age of 27.

He has authored many books on true Vedic Science including Vaiṣṇava Kantha Hara, Gurū Nirṇaya Dīpikā, Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā – The Song of God and Five Volumes of the Tenth Canto of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

The title of Mahant or High Priest of Vṛndāvana was bestowed upon His Holiness in 1991. In 2004 at the Kumbh Mela in Ujjain, India Mahant Śrī Kṛṣṇa Balarām Swami was bestowed the title of 'Mahāmandelswar' by the Bhārata Sādhu Samāj.