

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EKADASHI**

### **EKADASHI - The Day of Lord Hari**

**(The Universal Medicine for cleansing one of all bad karma and the gaining of good karma)**



Ekadashi is a Sanskrit word, which means 'the eleventh day'. Ekadashi occurs twice in a month, in the bright fortnight and the dark fortnight. We have supplied the dates on **EKADASHI** on this website. The special feature of Ekadashi is a fast that one abstains from grains, eating meat, shaving and cutting one's nails.

Lord Krishna says that if a person fasts on Ekadashi, "I will burn up all his sins. Indeed this day is the most meritorious day for destroying all kinds of sins." Ekadashi was created as the Supreme Medicine to remove the disease of the material world of having a miserable material body and mind that is full of suffering.

According to scriptures we take on sins (and even more obstacles in one's life) on this day if we consume grains since **PAAP PURUSHA** (sin personified) resides only in grains on this day. Also grains eaten on this day becomes harmful and remains undigested and turn toxic in the body-giving rise to various diseases and ailments. If any part of the body is overworked (generally

the stomach is the most overworked organ), there will be dislocation of the working of the body. So, in fasting (like on Ekadashi) the energy is equally distributed, as the digestive function is not there. But, there should be no overdoing in fasting. Fasting is supposed to cause buoyancy of feeling and not fatigue. So people who are sick and cannot observe a total fast can take milk, fruits, water, and fruit juices and vegetables. People, who are perfectly healthy and are confident, observe a complete fast. This helps in control of mind and will.

When one eats especially heavy foods, the blood circulation is accelerated towards the digestive organs, on account of which blood circulation to the head gets decreased after food is taken and so you feel sleepy and the thinking faculty practically ceases to function. Hence, there is no advantage in giving the physical system work on days you want to do devotional service unto God.

The significance of Ekadashi does not merely constituted of a fast, physically, though it is also an essential element but it has other deeper aspects. The movement of planets especially the Moon tremendously influences the entire personality of ours. The mind's presiding deity is the Moon. Ekadashi is particularly relevant to this relation of the Moon and mind. How is Ekadashi related to the movement of the Moon and mind? We have certain Energy Centers in the body called Chakras. The Moon's movement tells upon the movement of the mind through the Chakras. Now eating grains on Ekadashi causes an imbalance in the Chakra system - "opening" the door for various ailments and illnesses.

In the two fortnights on Ekadashi the mind gets concentrated and collected easily. This has been the experience given out by sages, and this has to be taken advantage of by devotees of the Lord. One is capable of concentration when the mind is naturally at ease. The mind cannot be concentrated when it is out of tune. So, the Ekadashi day in both fortnights is the occasion when the mind finds itself in its place. Seekers and Yogis take advantage of these two days and try to practice extra devotional service to God.

Apart from all these, there is a necessity to give the physiological system some rest once a while. It may be over-worked due to a little over-eating or indiscretion in diet. These irregularities unconsciously done during the fourteen days get rectified in one day. Thus the observance of Ekadashi has many advantages—physical, astral, spiritual — and because this day has connection with the relation of the mind with its abode together with the Moon, you feel mysteriously helped in your meditation and contemplation, because you do not know this consciously. But you can feel this for yourself by observing it.

One who dry fast (i.e. without water) should break fast the next morning approximately one hour after sunrise with a mixture of 50-50 hot milk and water sweetened with sugar. The effects of this drink loosens the toxins in the intestines where all the toxins have been absorbed during the fast. This expels the toxins within ½ hr.

If one cannot dry fast on Ekadashi then one can have fruits, fruit juices, water, milk and certain vegetables. If one does not know what to cook on this day then I can advise you on what to do. I will advise you on what to have, what not to have and 16 very simple recipes to cook on this day. Happy Fasting.

Ekadashi references in our Hindu shastras:-

**Brahma-Vaivarta Purana:** "Ekadashi destroys all a person's sin, bestows limitless piety, and causes them to remember Govinda." Thus, there are three aspects mentioned here about following Ekadashi (1) removal of bad karma, (2) gain of good karma, and (3) remembrance of Govinda (The master of the senses).

**Padma Purana:** - "All of the sins from the three worlds reside in grains in the form of a sinful person. Whatever sins are available in this world, they all together reside in grains on Ekadashi day by the order of Lord Narayana.

**Lord Krsna to Shree Garuda – Garuda Purana:** " There are five boats for the people who are drowning in the ocean of worldly existence: Lord Vishnu, the Bhagavad-Gita, Srimati Tulasi Devi, the cow, and Ekadashi"

**Padma Purana:** "Of all plants, the sacred Tulasi is most dear to Me, of all months, Kartik is most dear to Me, of all places of pilgrimages, My beloved Dvaraka is most dear to Me, and of all days, Ekadashi is most dear to Me.

\*\*\* **More Information on Ekadashi...**

(Please note some of the information given below is not practical in these times but its given because we didn't want to leave out any information)

## The Origin of Ekadashi

[From the Padma Purana, Uttara-Khanda, Chapter 38 ]

Shree Mahadeva (Lord Shiva) said:

1. O son, on one occasion I asked Lord Vishnu about the importance of Dvadashi, having heard which all sages having enjoyed pleasures went to heaven.

Narada Muni said:

2. O Mahadeva, of what kind would be the great vow of Mahadvadashi? O lord, O ruler of all, what kind of fruit would one get by observing it.

Lord Shiva said:

**3-17a.** O brahmana, this Ekadashi gives the fruit in the form of great religious merit. The best sages should observe it when it is in conjunction with certain constellations. Jaya, Vijaya, Jayanti and Papanashini — all these destroy sins.

They should be observed by those who desire certain fruits. When, in the bright half of the month, the star Punarvasu i.e. the seventh lunar mansion appears on the Ekadashi day, that is called Jaya, and it is the best of days. Having observed a fast on that day a man is freed from sin. There is no doubt about this. When, in the bright half of the month, the star Shravana i.e. the twenty-second lunar mansion appears on the Dvadashi day that is called Vijaya and it is the best of days. Gifts given on that day becomes a thousand fold in religious merit; so also food given to brahmanas becomes like that. In the same way a sacrifice performed or a fast observed on that day gives more than a thousand fold fruit. When on the Dvadashi in the bright half Rohini i.e. the fourth lunar mansion appears, that is called Jayanti. That day removes also sins. Lord Vishnu worshipped on that day certainly washes away sins, small or great, committed during one's previous seven existences. On Dvadashi in the bright half Pushya i.e. the eighth lunar mansion appears, then that will be the very meritorious Papanashini. The religious merit of that person who every day gives a prastha of sesamum-seeds to a brahmana for the (whole) year, and (the religious merit of him) who observes a fast on that day i.e. on the Papanashini are said to be equal. Lord Vishnu, the Lord of all, the Lord of the world, being pleased, appears actually i.e. in person only, and endless fruit is said to be obtained by him who observes a fast on that day. Lord Vishnu who was won over and worshipped on that day by Sagara, Kakutstha and Nahusha, gave them everything on the earth. There is no doubt that he who observes a fast on that day is freed from the sin due to speech, mental sin or especially bodily sin committed during the seven previous existences. A man having fasted on that Papanashini alone, which is joined with the star Pushya, obtains the fruit of having fasted on a thousand Ekadashis. Whatever like a bath, giving a gift, muttering of hymns, a sacrifice, self-study, worship of a deity, is done on that day is said to give an inexhaustible fruit.

**17b-18.** Therefore, those who desire the fruit like salvation should observe a fast on this day carefully. When Yudhishtira had the ablution after the fifth horse-sacrifice, he, the religious-minded one, asked Lord Krishna, the scion of the Yadu family:

Yudhishtira said:

**19.** O Lord, O Janardana, tell me all that, viz. what religious merit or what fruit is obtained by observing a fast on eating only at night or eating once a day.

The Lord said:

**20-27a.** In the cold season, when the auspicious month of Margashirsha has come, a man should fast on that Dvadashi which comes in the dark half, O son of Prithaa i.e. O son of Kunti, O Yudhishtira. Knowing what 'nakta' is, a man, with a pure heart and of a firm vow, eating only once on the tenth, and being controlled, should eat during the eighth part of the day when the Sun is setting. That should be known as 'nakta'. 'Nakta' is not eating only at night.

Nakta is enjoined for a householder before the stars appear in the sky. The nakta for an ascetic is eating only in the eighth part of the day. Eating at night is prohibited for him. Then, O Yudhishtira, he who has taken the vow, should make the religious observance in the morning, so also in the mid-day, and being pure, should bathe. Bathing in a temporary well is the lowest; bathing in a well is of a middling quality. Bathing in a tank is excellent. Bathing in a river is still better. O Yudhishtira, the sin and the religious merit are equal when a bath is taken in the water where living beings are troubled. Bathing at home is excellent, and the water should purify him. Therefore, O best of the Pandavas, a man should bathe in his house.

**27b-32.** At that time he should pray: 'O you earth, that are stepped over by horses, gone over by chariots and by Lord Vishnu, remove the sin that has been collected by me in my former existence'. He should give up anger and greed. He should think of one thing only, and be of a firm vow. He should not talk to a Shudra, so also to heretics, so also to those given to lying, so also to those who censure brahmanas, and to others of bad behaviour, to those who take away others' wealth, and to those who are adulterers. Having worshipped Lord Vishnu, he should make articles of food offered; and with a devoted mind he should offer lights in the house. O Partha, on that day he should avoid sleep and sexual union. He should pass the entire day in recreation by means of sacred texts.

**33-39.** O best king, he, being full of devotion, should keep awake during the night, should give presents to brahmanas, and should, after having saluted them, apologize to them. He should get observed i.e. observe the Ekadashi vow during the bright half as during the dark half of the month. He should not differentiate between the two Ekadashis. Listen to the fruit obtained by him who does like this. A man, after bathing at Shamkhoddhaara and after seeing the image of Lord Vishnu, does not deserve i.e. obtain even the sixteenth part of the merit of fasting on an Ekadashi day. O best king, a man who gives four lakhs of coin) on the days of the passage of the Sun from one Zodiacal sign to another, does not deserve i.e. obtain even the sixteenth part of the merit of fasting on an Ekadashi day. Indeed he, who observes a fast on an Ekadashi day, gets the same fruit as the religious merit that is due to the bath during the lunar eclipse or the solar eclipse at the holy place Prabhasa. He does not have rebirth after he has drunk water at Kedara. In the same way, O Yudhishtira, it removes staying in a womb.

**40-48.** The religious merit that he who observes a fast on an Ekadashi day gets is a hundredfold more than the fruit that he would get from a horse-sacrifice on the earth. The religious merit of him who fasts on an Ekadashi day is a hundred times more than the religious merit he would obtain by giving a thousand cows to (a brahmana) who has mastered the Vedas. Those who fast on the Ekadashi day are equal to those in whose bodies live the three deities Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. Those who are devotees of Lord Vishnu and who worship Lord Vishnu are those who perform virtuous deeds. So also the religious merit of i.e. due to the vow of Ekadashi cannot be counted.

This would be its religious merit, which is difficult to be obtained even by the devas. Half the religious merit of this is obtained even through eating at night only. Men would have half the religious merit of this through eating once a day. Sacred places, gifts, restraints roar till that time till a living being i.e. a human being would not fast on a day dear to Lord Vishnu. Therefore, O best Pandava, observe this vow. O Pandava, I do not know the quantity of religious merit about, which you are asking me. O Pandava, I have narrated to you the excellent vow, which should be kept secret. Even the performance of a thousand sacrifices is not equal to the Ekadashi vow.

Yudhishtira said:

**49.** O Lord, how has this auspicious Ekadashi day come up? How is it pure in the universe and how is it dear to the devas?

The Lord said:

**50-54.** O Partha, formerly in the Satya-Yuga there was a demon by name Mura. He was very wonderful but very fierce and caused fear to all devas. O king, even Lord Indra, and so also other devas were vanquished by that death-like great, wicked demon. Driven out of the heaven they roamed on the earth. With uncertainty and full of fear, all of them went to Shree Mahadeva, and Lord Indra told everything to Lord Shiva. He said: "O great deva, the devas fallen from the heaven are roaming on the earth and they who are staying among the mortals, do not shine at all. O deva, tell me the remedy. What course do i.e. should the devas follow?"

Shree Mahadeva said:

**55-58.** O You best among devas, O lord of devas, go there where He, the eagle-bannered God, the Lord of the world, the protector, and the best resort dwells. O best among devas, He will protect you. O Yudhishtira, on having heard the words of the lord, the very intelligent king of the devas went there along with the devas. Seeing Bhagavan, the Disc-holder, Lord Vishnu sleeping in the water, Lord Indra joined the palms of his hands, uttered this hymn of praise:

Shree Indra said:

**59-65.** Salutation to You, O Lord of the devas, O You who are saluted by devas and demons, O You enemy of the demons, O You lotus-eyed one, O Madhusudana, protect us. O Lord of the world, all devas frightened by the demon Mura have come to seek Your refuge. O You to whom Your devotees are dear, protect me. O Lord of devas, protect us; O Janardana, protect us, protect us. O You lotus-eyed one, O You destroyer of the demons, protect us. We all have approached You. You alone are our refuge, O Lord. O Lord, help the devas who have sought your shelter. O Bhagavan, You are the master; You are the intellect; You are the agent; You are the cause. You are the mother of all the people. You are the father of the world. O holy one, O Lord of devas, O You who

love those who seek your shelter; the devas that are frightened, have sought your refuge. O Lord, all the devas have been vanquished. All of them have been expelled from heaven by the very fierce and very vigorous demon named Mura. Hearing the words of Lord Indra, Lord Vishnu said these words:

**66.** "O Indra, of what kind is the demon? Of what form is he? Of what kind is his might? Where is the place of that wicked one? What is his strength? What is his valour? What is precious about him? O you very intelligent one, tell me that."

Shree Indra said:

**67-75.** O Lord of devas, formerly there was a very fierce, great demon named Talajangha who was born in the family of Brahma. His son, the demon Mura, was well known. He was very mighty, very powerful and fearful to devas. There was a city by name Chandravati. He lived in that place. He vanquished all devas, and expelled them from heaven. He installed another Indra as the chief of devas, so also another Vayu and another Agni. He fashioned other i.e. new Moon and Sun, so also Vayu and Varuna. He took possession of everything. O Janardana, this is the truth, the only truth. He made the world of devas bereft of all holy places. Hearing these words of Lord Indra, the angry Lord Vishnu said: "I shall kill the wicked demon, fearful to the devas." Then Lord Vishnu, along with other devas went to the city of Chandravati. The devas saw the demon roaring repeatedly. He vanquished all devas. They went in the ten directions. Seeing Lord Vishnu the demon said: "Wait, wait." The Lord, with his eyes red due to anger, said to him:

**76-84.** "O demon, O you of a bad conduct, see the power of my arm." Then Lord Vishnu struck all the wicked demons that were before him with divine arrows. They were overcome with fear. O Pandava, Lord Krishna i.e. Lord Vishnu discharged His disc against the forces of the demon. Hundreds of demons were cut off by it, and many died. Only one demon fought there repeatedly. He made all the devas flee and vanquished Lord Vishnu. Then of him who was vanquished by the demon, a close fight with the demon took place. He fought that close fight for a thousand divine years. Lord Vishnu became thoughtful. All devas had fled. Lord Vishnu was vanquished. He went to Badarikashrama. There was a cave named Simhavati. Lord Vishnu slept there in that cave. O Pandava, it was twelve yojanas in length and had one door only. He entered it and slept there. The demon was bent on killing Him. He was tired due to that great battle, and had slept there through His divine power. The demon pursued Him. He then entered that cave. Seeing Lord Vishnu asleep there, the demon was delighted. Thinking Lord Vishnu to have been vanquished like this and to have been entered by fear, he thought: 'I shall undoubtedly kill Him, the cause of fear to the demons.'

**85-90.** O Yudhishtira, then a maiden came out of Lord Vishnu's body. She was beautiful, very auspicious, and had divine missiles and weapons. She, of a great might and valour came up from a portion of Lord Vishnu's luster. O

Dhananjaya, that lord of demons, Mura by name, saw her. He directed a fight there. The maiden skilled in all kinds of battle, fought there. The great demon by name Mura was reduced to ash due to her humkaara sound. When the demon was killed, Lord Vishnu woke up. Seeing the demon fallen dead He was amazed: 'who has killed this fierce and very cruel enemy of Mine? That person has done a very ferocious deed through compassion for Me.'



Ekadashi Devi killing Mura-asura.

The maiden said:

**91-93a.** He having conquered devas, Gandharvas, yakshas and goblins, so also Lord Indra and others, expelled them from heaven. I saw Lord Vishnu asleep, and Mura had pursued Him. I thought: 'He will destroy the three worlds when Lord Vishnu is asleep.' Hearing those words of her, Lord Vishnu, spoke (these) words: "How is it that you vanquished him too who had defeated me?"

Ekadashi Devi said:

**93b.** O Lord, due to Your favour I killed the great demon.



The Lord said:

**94.** In the three worlds sages and devas are delighted. O auspicious one, tell me what your mind likes. There is no doubt that I shall give it even if it is very difficult to be obtained by devas.

Ekadashi Devi said:

**95-96.** If, You are pleased, O Janardana, I desire one boon in my heart, O Lord of the world. O Lord of devas, I shall ask for what is desired by me. O Lord, O master of the world, if your offer is true, then give me three utterances.

The Lord said:

**97.** O you of a good vow, I have certainly spoken the truth, I have repeated my promise three times. Now there would be no absence of promise .

Ekadashi Devi said:

**98-101.** O Lord of devas, do for me what is proper in the three worlds, in the four ages and everywhere in the three worlds. Through Your favour I shall be the chief of all sacred places, the destroyer of all difficulties, and one who brings about all kinds of well-being. If, O Lord, You are pleased with me, then, may they who through devotion for me and devotion for You, fast on my day, have all kinds of well-being. O Lord Vishnu, give wealth, righteousness and salvation to him who observes a fast or a nakta or who eats once a day on the day sacred to me.

Bhagavan Vishnu said:

**102-110.** O auspicious one, all that you say will take place. O good one, you will grant all desires. This will not be otherwise. My devotees who in the world will observe the Ekadashi vow and worship Me in Kartik will undoubtedly obtain salvation. O Lord, the Ekadashi is famous in the four ages and the three worlds. I look upon you as a power. The third, the eighth, the ninth, the fourteenth, and especially this eleventh day are dear to Lord Vishnu. A man who observes the Ekadashi vow gets religious merit more than obtained from all the sacred places. This is true, undoubtedly true. He gave this vow to her repeating it thrice. There was no doubt about it. The Ekadashi of a great vow became glad and strong. 'You will kill the observer's enemy. You will give him the highest position. You, giving all kinds of welfare, will remove all difficulties. O Yudhishtira, the Ekadashi of both the fortnights is equal in merit and is auspicious. A man should not differentiate between the bright Ekadashi and the dark Ekadashi. He should devoutly listen to pious accounts by day or at night. For both the fortnights Ekadashi would be the full day. At the sunrise the Ekadashi day is little (i.e. is in a small part). At the end of the vow is the Trayodashi (i.e. the thirteenth day).

**111-114a.** In between the two there is the full Dvadashi i.e. the twelfth day. Thus that Ekadashi vow which touches these three days is dear to Lord Vishnu. If a man fasts on one Ekadashi he would get the fruit of having observed a thousand Ekadashis. This would be thousand fold if the fast is broken on Dvadashi. Ashtami, Ekadashi, Shashthi, Tritiya and Chaturdashi, mixed with the previous day, should not be observed as fast days. A man should observe a fast on any one of these when mixed with the next day. If the Ekadashi lasts for a day and night and would continue for a ghatika in the next morning, that day should be avoided. That Ekadashi, along with Dvadashi, should be fasted on.

**114b-118.** Thus, I have told you about the Ekadashi falling in both the fortnights. There is no doubt that a man should observe a fast on the Ekadashi day. They who observe this fast go to the place of Lord Vishnu where the eagle-bannered Lord Vishnu dwells. Those men who are absorbed in devotion for Lord Vishnu are blessed in this world. That man who would at all times recite the importance of the Ekadashi vow, obtains the religious merit which is the fruit of the gift of a thousand cows. There is no doubt that those who devoutly listen to it by day or at night are freed from the sins of killing a brahmana etc. O best king, the exposition of the significance of the Gita is not equal to devotion to Lord Vishnu. There is no other vow like that of the Ekadashi that destroys sins.

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