

Questions and Answers On Ekadashi

What is Ekadashi?

Ekadashi is a Sanskrit word, which means 'the eleventh day'. Ekadashi occurs twice in a month, in the bright fortnight and the dark fortnight. One can find these dates on Indian calendars. 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.

What are we not supposed to eat on Ekadashi?

The thumb rule is that if you feel that the food that you will be consuming has grains then you shouldn't consume... but this is a basic guideline.. Please note that there are many gray areas as to what to eat or what not to eat.. Abstain from: - grains (cereals, breads, wheat, flour, beans, rice, dhals, green beans, roti, coffee, etc) meat, jeera, mustard seeds, hing, soomph, methi seeds, shop turmeric (you can use whole turmeric).

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The thumb rule is that if you feel that the food that you will be consuming has grains then you shouldn't consume... but this is a basic guideline.. Please note that there are many gray areas as to what to eat or what not to eat.. Whole turmeric, clean salt, cinnamon sticks, clean oil, butter, ghee, ginger, chilli, curry leaves, maas (yogurt), cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, clean sugar, rooibos tea, spinach, dhanian, thyme, peppers, ground pepper, mint, green bananas, fresh cream, sour cream, bay leaves. Potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, cabbage, pumpkin, butternut, gem squash, carrots, lettuce, all kinds of fruits, paneer.

Can a funeral be performed on Ekadashi?

Absolutely NOT!!! Any shraddha Puja (i.e. a funeral, the 10th day puja, the 12/13th puja, the 6th and the 11 and 1/2 month pujas should **NEVER** be performed on this most holy of days. Srila Jiva Goswami has given quotations from many sastras stating that the shraddha ceremony of oblations to the forefathers should not be performed on Ekadashi Tithi (day). When the Tithi of the death anniversary falls on Ekadashi day, the shraddha ceremony should be held not on Ekadashi but on the next day, or Dvadashi. In the Brahma-Vaivarta Purana this is stated:-

Ye kurvanti maheepaala
shraaddham caikaadashee-dine
trayas te narakam yaanti
daataa bhoktaa ca prerakah

"If one performs the shraddha ceremony of oblations to the forefathers on the Ekadashi tithi, then the performer, the forefathers for whom the shraddha is observed, and the purohita, or the family priest who encourages the ceremony, all go to hell." Srimad Bhagavatam 7.14.23 Purport... There are very grave consequences for those who perform shraddha puja on Ekadashi.

Can one perform weddings on Ekadashi?

Yes this is fine as long as one offers Lord Ganesh, Mother Gauri, the Navagrahas (planets) non grain food. With regards to Lord Vishnu we offer grains since we are fasting for Him. But the real problem arises what food to prepare for the invited guests, since the staple food for most Indian weddings is Biryani, Dhal, Salad and Suji (pudding). Now remember if you perform the wedding on Ekadashi you **MUST** cook Ekadashi (non-grain) food even for the guests... It just don't work that the groom and bride has Ekadashi food but the invited guests has grain food. I would **STRONGLY** advise this as this will be a very inauspicious start to one's married life.

Can one perform a Katha and Jhunda Prayer on Ekadashi?

In a Jhunda puja one hoists a jhunda (Flag) to Shree Hanumanji. Now we know that one traditionally offers to Shree Hanumanji Rhot and Panjari... These two items consists of grains. As I mentioned above that even Shree Hanumanji observes the Ekadashi fast, so to offer grains to Shree Hanumanji, do you really think Hanumanji will accept that food? Of course not... So I would strongly advise one to perform one's Katha and Jhunda on a day that's does not fall on Ekadashi. And when one performs the puja one generally invites family members and friends... Then it means you must cook Ekadashi (non-grain) food for them as well...

Can one perform a havan on Ekadashi?

Yes as long as the food that is offered to Shree Ganesh-Gauri is non grain foods. The grains that are offered into the fire are ultimately for Shree Vishnu.

Can one perform a Hurdi/Nelengu on Ekadashi?

Firstly one should plan one's wedding carefully because if the Hurdi/Nelengu is done on Ekadashi others issues come up like the food you are going to cook for the guests

has to be Ekadashi (non-grain) food. As well as the turmeric (hurdi) must be whole turmeric ground to a paste... One cannot use shop turmeric because that has flour (which is grain) in it. Also mustard oil is used but on Ekadashi one cannot use this...

Can one perform a Durga Path puja on Ekadashi?

I would advise against performing one's Durga path on Ekadashi as one offers to Ma Durga Halwa, puri, boiled channa, sweet rice etc. This is grains and as I has stated above that Mother Durga herself fasts on this most holy of days.

Additional information:-

* In Pitr Paksha, Ekadashi is 4 days before new moon (Amavasya). On this day one should not offer any grains to one's ancestors. One should offer Ekadashi (non- grain food) on this day. In 2017 Pitar Paksha Ekadashi falls on 16th September.

* Navaratri... with regards to Navaratri its fine as Navaratri falls immediately after Pitr Pakshafor nine days. Ekadashi is observed two days after Navaratri ends...*

When to start observing Ekadashi: sunrise or midnight?

Srila Prabhupad said:- “Regarding your first question, we observe Ekadashi from sunrise to sunrise. The 12 midnight is western astronomical calculation, but the Vedic astronomical calculation begins either from the sunrise or the moonrise. Generally it is sunrise. Our calculation is like this: when the sunrise is there, Ekadashi tithi (date) must be there. If Ekadashi tithi is not in the sunrise and the tithi begins, say after a few minutes after the sunrise, then we accept that day as previous to Ekadashi. All our ceremonies are calculated in that way. This means we must see the tithi during sunrise. Therefore, sometimes our dates of ceremonies do not exactly coincide like the western calculations.” Srila Prabhupada letter, 30 September 1969)...

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