

Additional Information On Ekadashi

From the above article and story we can understand that Ekadashi is a form of Lord Vishnu, and by observing the Ekadashi vow, it not only decreases the amount of sin (bad karma) we imbibe, but it also eats up sinful reactions to help pave our way back to the abode of Lord Vishnu, Vaikuntha. This is also why Ekadashi is called “The mother of devotion”. It helps to remove the obstacles on our path of devotional service to the Lord.

Each Ekadashi day has particular benefits and blessings that one can attain by the performance of specific activities done on that day. By engaging in the extra study to learn what these are, one can derive even more benefit from each particular Ekadashi. Reading the glories of each Ekadashi day, along with all the names of these days, **(WHICH IS GIVEN ON THIS WEBSITE)** will also achieve a similar goal of observing the Ekadashi vow. This also means that we are encouraged to increase our spiritual activities that day, which are centered around the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. Charity, especially to advanced devotees and preachers of the dharma, or directly engaging in activities of Krishna consciousness, Deity worship, chanting, or other spiritual activities on Ekadashi are also highly recommended and brings great spiritual benefits to the performer.

It is said that even if one mistakenly misses the observance of an Ekadashi, he or she may make up for it by observing it the very next day on Dvadashi, and then break one’s fast from grain on the next day, Trayodashi. {But I am not a big advocate of this.} One may also observe the special fast on Nirjala Ekadashi. This is also called Bhima or Pandava Nirjala Ekadashi. This is because the Pandava brother known as Bhima was so strong and had such a voracious appetite that he could not observe Ekadashis twice a month. He could not fast because he was too hungry. So Lord Krishna told him to merely observe one Ekadashi a year, which is the Nirjala Ekadashi. *Nir-jala* means no water. So he had to observe at least one Ekadashi a year, and on that day he had to abstain from not only beans and grains, but from all foods, even water. So devotees who miss an Ekadashi day often observe a complete fast from all food and liquids on the Nirjala Ekadashi, which is usually sometime in June, and thus make up for whatever was missed. However, this is a very potent Ekadashi, so a complete fast on this day gives one who observes this many pious credits.

Sometimes there is a day called Mahadvadashi. This is when Ekadashi is astronomically combined with Dvadashi, or the twelfth day of the full moon or new moon lunar cycle. This is called a pure Ekadashi and the observance is often started the evening before Mahadvadashi and through the next day with the basic Ekadashi fast.

Breaking the Ekadashi fast on the next day with some foodstuffs made from grains is usually done two-and-a-half hours or shortly thereafter from the time of the sunrise.

In the *Caitanya-caritamrita* (Adi-lila, 15-9-10), Sri Caitanya begs His mother to follow Ekadashi, as was expected of all His followers. And in the purport to this

verse Srila Prabhupada explains that even though devotees eat food cooked for and offered to Lord Vishnu, *prasada*, which is spiritually potent and free from all karma, even on Ekadashi a devotee does not eat even *maha-prasada* that has grains in it, though it can be saved for the next day.

In this way, by the observance of the special Ekadashi day and its special fast, a person can accelerate their spiritual growth and awareness, and free themselves from negative karma that otherwise will only further bind them to the continuous rounds of birth and death.

When should one begin the Ekadashi Vrat -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)...

Children should observe the Ekadashi fast from at least eight years of age, if not from an earlier age. (*Hari-bhakti-vilasa*)

Tulasi leaves must never be cut on Dvadashi (the day following Ekadashi).

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