

## The Month of Kartik 2021 (21<sup>st</sup> October to 19<sup>th</sup> November)



Lord Krsna been tied up by Yashoda maiya

Kartik Maas is the most auspicious month in the Vedic/Hindu/Sanatana Calendar. This year the Kartik month is observed from **21<sup>st</sup> October to 19<sup>th</sup> November**.

Lord Krsna states “Of all plants, the sacred Tulsi 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” = Padma Purana

In the Kartik Mahatmya from the Uttar Khanda of Padma Purana the glorification of Kartik has been elaborately dealt with. In the dialogue between King Dilip and Vashishta Muni on the most efficacious means of obtaining salvation, the wise sage had referred to Kartik Mahatmya by illustrating various significant kathas pertaining to this most auspicious month. Satyabhama inquiries of Shree Krishna as to how the Kartik month came to be regarded as holy. In reply, Lord Krishna relates the katha of Shankhasura the demon who carried away the Vedas into the sea and how Lord Vishnu then took the incarnation of Matsya (Fish) and kill Shankha Asura (conch shell demon) and restore the Vedas to the Devas. The Matsya incarnation took place on (Ekadashi) 11<sup>th</sup> day of Kartik and is commemorated by many devout Hindus through bathing and prayers at Prayag and Badikashrama. Lord Krishna Himself stressed the importance of religious observances during Kartik to His wife Satyabhama.

**Haribodhini Ekadashi:** This is the 11<sup>th</sup> day of Kartik bright fortnight or the Kartik Ekadashi and is a most important day of Lord Vishnu. This year Haribodhini Ekadashi falls on the 14<sup>th</sup> November. Haribodhini means that which bestows the knowledge of Shree Hari. Devotees of Lord Hari are said to observe fasts and rigorous penances to seek knowledge. All meritorious actions done on this day boomerang with thousand fold credits. On Kartik Full Moon day, (this year this falls on the 19<sup>th</sup> November) Srila Vyasa-dev, the famous compiler of the Vedas is to be worshipped. Also on this Full Moon day, Guru Puja is performed when every student worships his own Guru. Kartik or Tripura Purnima: This falls on the full moon day of Kartik, alluding to Lord Shiva's destruction of the demon Tripura and signifies the subjugation of evil and fostering goodness. Fireworks and illuminations of houses make the God's celebration of their victory. It is therefore also called the Dev-Diwali or Diwali of the Devas.

#### **Bhishma Panchaka (the last 5 "Vedic" days of Damodara month)**

Bhishmadeva instructing the Pandavas in these five days before he left his body. The last five "vedic" days of the month of Kartik (Damodara) (this year its falls from 25<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> November) are traditionally known as the Bhishma Panchaka or Vishnu Panchaka. In the Hari Bhakti Vilasa, it is said that if one is capable, one should observe fasting from certain foodstuffs on the Bhishma-panchaka for the pleasure of the Lord. (This is optional and according to ones capabilities). The Padma Purana says that one pleases the Lord and makes spiritual advancement by such austerities. If one could not fast or perform any tapasya for Lord Damodara for the previous 25 days then by fasting on these 5 days he/she receives the same benefits as fasting the entire month. During this vrata, offering of certain items to the Lord are also prescribed.

They are listed below. Here are offerings prescribed for Bhishma Panchaka.

Devotees may offer the following to the Deity form of the Lord:

On the first day, one must offer padma (lotus) flowers to the feet of the Lord

On the second day, one must offer bilva (wood-apple) leaves of the thigh of the Lord

On the third day, one must offer gandha (scents) to the navel of the Lord

On the fourth day, one must offer java flower to the shoulders of the Lord

On the fifth day, one must offer malati flower to the head (siro-desa) of the Lord.

(Of course in South Africa we do not have certain of the above ingredients so mentally offer for example a bilva wood and so forth. What's important is that we must perform this vrat with faith. That is what Lord Damodara is looking for.)

Shree Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has explained that just as Ekadashi is the holiest of days, Kartik is the holiest of months. What is not so well known, however, is that the last five days of Kartik are especially important. [Excerpts from "Vaishnavakanthahara, compiled by Krsna-Balarama Swami) "The last five vedic days of Kartik

month are known as Bhishma-Panchaka. Grandfather Bhishma fasted for these five Vedic days, preparing to give up his life. However one observes Kartik vrata, he should intensify it for the last five vedic days. The best way to observe the Kartik vrata is to abstain from eating grains for the whole month, and to take only milk or water for the last five days. If one eats grains during the month, he should avoid them for the last five days. Also, one should only eat once a day. This is the proper procedure [for strict adherence]."

"This five vedic day fast is difficult for those people who are not serious and who are hypocrites. If someone observes this fast, he is considered to have observed all other fasts, because it is greatly meritorious and frees one from great sins. Therefore, everyone should make a great endeavor to fast on these last five days of Bhishmadeva". "The fast should begin by remembering Srila Bhishmadeva on tenth Dasami day (i.e. 14<sup>th</sup> November and should end on Purnima [full moon] i.e. on the 19<sup>th</sup> November. One should eat only vegetables or fruits and should worship Lord Krsna. If one needs to eat, one should do so only in the evening." "All of one's material and spiritual desires can be fulfilled and all of the senses can be controlled by following this five-day fast. One should follow this Kartik fast in a most auspicious place of pilgrimage. If one follows this Kartik fast, one can obtain the results attainable from fasting on the auspicious fasting days for a whole year. "Srila Suta Goswami says in the Padma Purana, Uttarakhanda, 'this liberating fast is unknown even to the devas. If one listens to what I have said and fasts on these five days, even if he had sex with an unqualified woman or (his sister, daughter, mother, etc.), he becomes free from those sins. Even if someone attentively listens to this narration, he also achieves happiness. I tell you the truth again and again that one should keep this fast, and continue performing it unceasingly - such a person surely achieves liberation."

"In the month of Kartik, which is very dear to Shree Hari, one who bathes early in the morning attains the merit of bathing in all places of pilgrimage. Anybody who offers the Lord a ghee lamp in the month of Kartik, O brahmana, becomes free from all kinds of sins, such as killing a brahmana, and he goes to the abode of Lord Hari." (Brahma Khanda). "Suta Goswami says, "If anyone fasts and observes the Kartik vrata according to the rules and regulations, the Yamadutas, the messengers of Yamaraja, run away from him, just as an elephant runs away by seeing a lion. This dear fast [vrata] of Lord Vishnu is even better than performing one hundred great sacrifices that would take him to heaven because the person who observes the Kartik vrata goes to the spiritual world." (Padma Purana) "Although one can easily reach Mathura [Vraja Mandala] on this earth, and although Kartik month is easily observable, and although in the month of Kartik all of the places of pilgrimage, oceans, rivers, and lakes come to the Mathura area, still, those human beings who are foolish

and suffering in the ocean of material existence do not take advantage of it." (Padma Purana). "Oh sage, that foolish person who does not offer a lamp in Lord Keshava's temple during Kartik is not considered a Vaishnava (a devotee of the Lord)." The conclusion is, as Lord Brahma tells Narada Muni in the Skanda Purana: 'O son Narada, the month of Kartik is very dear to Lord Keshava.

If anyone acts meritoriously in this month just to please Lord Vishnu, he receives unlimited results" The point to emphasize here is that Kartik is not just about fasting. The most important thing is to somehow or another increase our activities in devotional service, especially during this holy month. If hundreds of millions of Islamic faithfuls can follow severe vows of fasting during their month of Ramadan, then we should be able to perform some special austerities to please the Lord of Kartik, Shree Damodara, as it has been prescribed and laid down by our Acharyas. Srimati Radharani is Herself the Queen of Vrindavan, who maintains the vows of and directly reciprocates with Her devotees during this, holy month, which is also called Urja vrata. Kartik is the best, the purest of purifiers, and most glorious of all months. Kartik month is particularly dear to Lord Shree Krsna. This month is full of bhakta vatsalya. Any vrata, even the smallest, will yield huge results. The effect of performing a Kartik Vrata lasts for one hundred lifetimes, whereas ordinary vratas only last for one lifetime! Srimati Radhika is the presiding deity of the holy month of Kartik. Rupa Goswami and others refer to Srimati Radharani as Kartik Devi; in other words, Shree Radhika is the Goddess or presiding Deity of the Kartik Vrata. = From the Padma Purana.

FINALLY remember what you do in this month has a thousand fold effect, so try to perform many good deeds and charity as possible because that multiplies by a thousand.

**How to observe the Kartik Month?** Many devout devotees of Shree Krsna give up something that they like for a month. For example if one likes milk, then one gives up milk and its products for a month. By performing this vrata one is showing one's devotion and austerities to please the Lord. Many also have only one meal after sunset. Also in the morning after bathing go to your prayer place and offer lamp (clay lamp with ghee and wick) to a picture of Lord Damodara (we have provided a picture at the beginning of this article.). Offer the lamp 7 times clockwise around the whole picture of Lord Damodara, while playing the Shree Damodarastakam (which is given below but the video is only available on DIPIKA). Now for a bonus just for reading this article. Lord Shiva states in the Padma Purana to his wife Parvati Devi that, "if one offers a lamp with a Tulsi twig in it to Shree Krsna that person gets the benefit of 10 million arati's", BUT in this period remember I mentioned that everything is multiplied by 1000. So by offering a lamp the benefits you receive is 10 million times 1000. You can also add Sesame seeds to the lamp as this is

most holy. Sesame seeds originated from the pores of Lord Vishnu and removes eons of sins committed. By offering Lord Damodara a lamp with Tulsi and sesame seeds daily you will receive unlimited punya karma – spiritual merits.

### Summary of the Damodara Lila from Srimad Bhagavatam 10<sup>th</sup> Canto 9<sup>th</sup> chapter:

One day, the maidservants being engaged in other work, mother Yashoda was churning the yogurt into butter herself, and in the meantime Krsna came and requested her to allow Him to suck her breast milk. Of course, mother Yashoda immediately allowed Him to do so, but then she saw that the hot milk on the oven was boiling over, she immediately stopped allowing Krsna to drink the milk of her breast and went to stop the milk on the oven from overflowing. Krsna, however, having been interrupted in His sucking of His mother's breast, got very angry. He took a piece of stone, broke the churning pot and entered a room, where He began to eat the freshly churned butter. When mother Yashoda, after attending to the overflowing milk, returned and saw the pot broken, she could understand that this was the work of Krsna, and therefore she went to search for Him. When she entered the room, she saw Krsna standing on the large mortar, which is used for grinding spices. Having turned the mortar upside down, He was stealing butter hanging from a swing and was distributing the butter to the monkeys. As soon as Krsna saw that His mother had come, He immediately began to run away, and mother Yashoda began to follow Him. After going some distance, mother Yashoda was able to catch Krsna, who because of His offense was crying. Mother Yashoda, of course, threatened to punish Krsna if He acted that way again, and she decided to bind Him with rope. Unfortunately, when the time came to knot the rope, the rope with which she wanted to bind Him was short by a distance equal to the width of two fingers. When she made the rope longer by adding another rope, she again saw that it was short by two fingers. Again and again she tried, and again and again she found the rope too short by two fingers. Thus she became very tired, and Krsna, seeing His affectionate mother so tired, allowed Himself to be bound. Now, being compassionate, He did not show her His unlimited potency. (The full version of this katha is available on our website DIPIKA).



## Shree Damodara Astakam

(1)

namamisvaram saccidanandarupam  
lasatkundalam gokule bhrajanam  
yasodabhiyolukhalad dhavamanam  
paramrstam atyantato drutya gopya

1) To the Supreme Lord, whose form is the embodiment of eternal existence, knowledge, and bliss, whose shark-shaped earrings are swinging to and fro, who is beautifully shining in the divine realm of Gokula, who I (due to the offense of breaking the pot of yogurt that His mother was churning into butter and then stealing the butter that was kept hanging from a swing) is quickly running from the wooden grinding mortar in fear of mother Yashoda, but who has been caught from behind by her who ran after Him with greater speed to that Supreme Lord, Shree Damodara, I offer my humble obeisances.

(2)

rudantam muhur netrayugmam mrjantam  
karambhojayugmena satankanetram  
muhuh svasakampatirekhankakantha  
sthitagraivam damodaram bhaktibaddham

2) (Seeing the whipping stick in His mother's hand) He is crying and rubbing His eyes again and again with His two lotus hands. His eyes are filled with fear, and the necklace of pearls around His neck, which is marked with three lines like a conch shell, is shaking because of His quick breathing due to crying. To this Supreme Lord, Shree Damodara, whose belly is bound not with ropes but with His mother's pure love, I offer my humble obeisances.

(3)

itidrk svalilabhir anandakunde  
svaghosam nimajjantam akhyapayantam  
tadiyesitajnesu bhaktair jitatvam  
punah prematas tam satavrtti vande

3) By such childhood pastimes as this He is drowning the inhabitants of Gokula in pools of ecstasy, and is revealing to those devotees who are absorbed in knowledge of His supreme majesty and opulence that He is only conquered by devotees whose pure love is imbued with intimacy and is free from all conceptions of awe and reverence. With great love I again offer my obeisances to Lord Damodara hundreds and hundreds of times.

(4)

varam deva moksam na moksavadhim va  
na canyam vrne 'ham varesad apiha  
idam te vapur natha gopalabalam  
sada me manasy avirastam kim anyaih

4) O Lord, although You are able to give all kinds of benedictions, I do not pray to You for the boon of impersonal liberation, nor the highest liberation of eternal life in Vaikuntha, nor any other boon (which may be obtained by executing the nine processes of bhakti). O Lord, I simply wish that this form of Yours as Bala Gopala in Vrndavan may ever be manifest in my heart, for what is the use to me of any other boon besides this?

(5)

idam te mukhambhojam atyantailair  
vrtam kuntalaih snigdharaktais' ca gopya  
muhus cumbitam bimbaraktadharam me  
manasy avirastam alam laksalabhaih

5) O Lord, Your lotus face, which is encircled by locks of soft black hair tinged with red, is kissed again and again by mother Yashoda, and Your lips are reddish like the bimba fruit. May this beautiful vision of Your lotus face be ever manifest in my heart. Thousands and thousands of other benedictions are of no use to me.

(6)

namo deva damodarananta vishno  
prasida prabho dukhajalabdhimagnam  
krpadrstivrstyatinam batanu  
grhanesa mam ajnam edhy aksidrsyah

6) O Supreme Godhead, I offer my obeisances unto You. O Damodara! O Ananta! O Vishnu! O master! O my Lord, be pleased upon me. By showering Your glance of mercy upon me, deliver this poor ignorant fool who is immersed in an ocean of worldly sorrows, and become visible to my eyes.

(7)

kuveratmajau baddhamurtyaiva yadvat  
tvaya mocitau bhaktibhajau krtau ca  
tatha premabhaktim svakam me prayaccha  
na mokse graho me 'sti damodareha

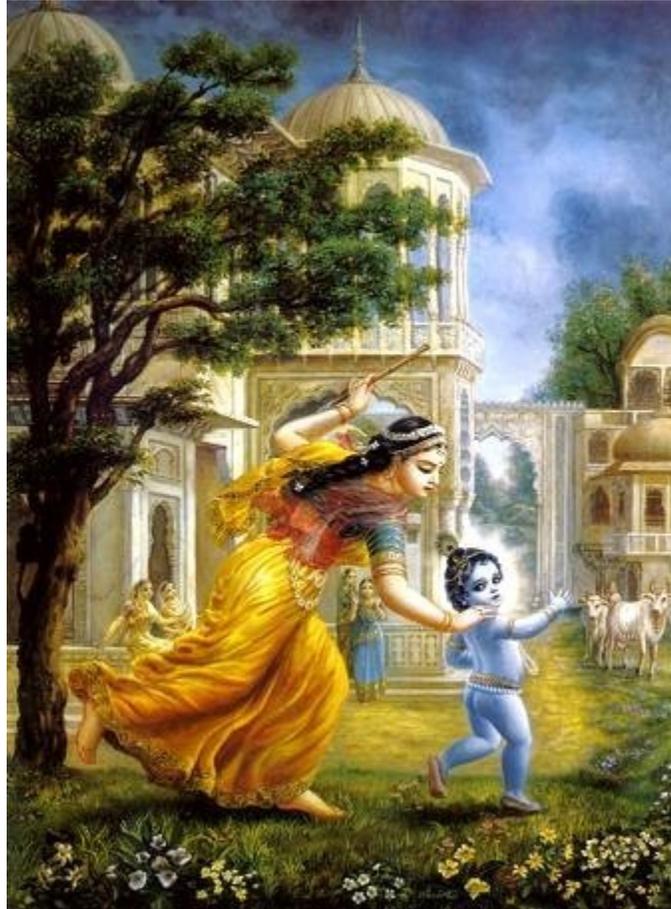
7) O Lord Damodara, just as the two sons of Kuvera Manigriva and Nalakuvara were delivered from the curse of Narada and made into great devotees by You in Your form as a baby tied with rope to a wooden grinding mortar, in the same way, please give to me Your own premabhakti. I only long for this and have no desire for any kind of liberation.

(8)

namas te 'stu damne sphuraddiptidhamne  
tvadiyodarayatha visvasya dhamne  
namo radhikayai tvadiyapriyayai  
namo 'nantalilaya devaya tubhyam

8) O Lord Damodara, I first of all offer my obeisances to the brilliantly effulgent rope which binds Your belly. I then offer my obeisances to Your belly, which is the abode of the entire universe. I humbly bow down to Your most beloved Srimati Radharani, and I offer all obeisances to You, the Supreme Lord, who displays unlimited pastimes.

This song is sung during the Month of Kartik. As quoted in the Shree Hari Bhakti Vilasa, "In the month of Kartik one should worship Lord Damodara and daily recite the prayer known as Damodarastaka, which has been chanted by the sage Satyavrata and which attracts Lord Damodara. (Shree Haribhaktivilasa 2.16.198)."

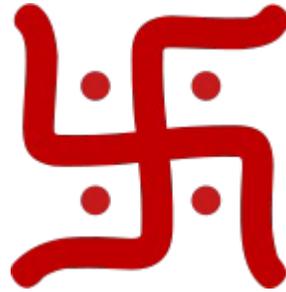


Yashoda Maiya chasing naughty Krsna

Vrndavandhama, ki jaya!  
Kartikvrata, ki jaya!  
Urjavrata, ki jaya!  
BhishmaPanchaka, ki jaya!  
DamodaraLila, ki jaya!  
Jaya Shree Shree RadhaDamodara!  
Jaya, jaya Shree Radhe!

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