

21. Ashwin-Krishna Ekadasi, or Indira Ekadasi

Yudhishtira Maharaj said, Oh Lord, what is the name of the Ekadasi that occurs during the dark fortnight (*Krishna paksha*) of the month of Ashwin (September-October)? Please describe its glories to me. The Supreme Lord, Lord Sri Krishna then replied, "This Holy day is called Indira Ekadasi. If a person fasts on this day, all his sins are eradicated and his forefathers who have fallen into hell are liberated. Oh best of kings, one who simply hears about this sacred Ekadasi 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 Mahishmati. 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, Sri Narada Muni, was seen descending. The king inviting him into the palace, offering him a comfortable seat, washing his feet, and spoke sweet words of welcome. Then Narada Muni said to Maharaj Indrasena, 'Oh king, your kingdom is prospering?' The king replied, By your kind grace, Oh greatest of sages, everything is quite well. Sri Narada, the sage among the *devas*, then said, Oh king, I am astonished.

When I descended from Brahmaloaka to Yamaloka, I noticed your father in Yamaraja's assembly. Though he had been very religious, because he broke an Ekadasi fast prematurely, he had to go to the Yamaloka. Your father gave me a message for you. He said, In Mahishmati 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 Yamaraja's kingdom. Please give him this message from me: 'Oh son, kindly observe the coming Indira Ekadasi and give much in charity so I can go upward to heaven.' When the king heard the words of Naradji he was greatly grieved and he said 'Oh Maharishi. Please tell me specifically how to observe a fast on Indira Ekadasi, and also tell me during what month and on what day it occurs. Narada Muni replied, Oh king, please listen as I describe to you the full process of observing the Indira Ekadasi.

This Ekadasi occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Ashwin. On the *Dashami tithi*, the day before Ekadasi, 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 Ekadasi 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. Oh lotus-eyed Supreme Lord, Oh infallible one, please give me shelter at Your lotus feet. At noon, stand before the sacred form of the Sri Shaligram Shila and worship Him faithfully, following all the rules and regulations; then offer oblations of ghee into the sacred fire, and *tarpana* directed to help your forefathers. Next, feed qualified Brahmins and offer them some charity according to your means. Now take the food *pindas* you offered to your forefathers, smell it, and then offer it to a cow.

Next, worship Lord Hrishiksha with incense and flowers, and finally, remain awake all night near the Deity of Lord Sri Keshava. Early in the morning of the next day, *Dvadasi tithi*, worship Sri Hari with great devotion and invite Brahmin devotees to a sumptuous feast. Then feed your relatives, and finally take your meal in silence. Oh king, if you strictly observe a fast on Indira Ekadasi in this way, with controlled senses, your father will surely be elevated to the abode of lord Vishnu. After saying this, Devarishi Narada immediately disappeared from the scene to bless someone else with his presence. 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 the Dvadasi tithi, flowers fell from the sky. The merit that Indrasena maharaj earned by observing this fast released his father from the kingdom of Yamaraja and caused him to attain a completely spiritual body.

Indeed, Indrasena saw him rising to the abode of Lord Hari on the back of Garuda *Vahan*. Indrasena himself was able to rule his kingdom without any obstacles, and in time when he handed over the kingdom to his son, he also went to the spiritual realm of Vaikuntha. Oh Yudhishtira, these are the glories of the Indira Ekadasi, which occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Ashwin. 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 Godhead, where he lives eternally.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Ashwin-krishna Ekadasi, or Indira Ekadasi, taken from the Brahma-vaivarta Purana.