

24. Haribodhini Ekadasi or Devotthaani Ekadasi

Lord Brahma said to Narada Muni, Dear son, O best of the sages, I shall narrate to you the glories of Haribodhini Ekadasi, which eradicates all kinds of sins and bestows great merit, and ultimately liberation, upon the wise persons who surrender unto the Supreme Lord. O best of the Brahmanas, the merits acquired by bathing in the Ganges remain significant only as long as Haribodhini Ekadasi does not come. This Ekadasi, which occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Kartika, is much more purifying than a bath in the ocean, at a place of pilgrimage, or in a lake. This sacred Ekadasi is more powerful in nullifying sin than one thousand Asvamedha sacrifices and one hundred Rajasuya sacrifices. Narada Muni inquired O father, please describe the relative merits of fasting completely on Ekadasi, eating supper (without grains or beans), or eating once at midday (without grains or beans). Lord Brahma replied, If a person eats once at midday on Ekadasi, the sins of his previous birth are erased, if he eats supper, the sins acquired during his previous two births are removed, and if he fasts completely, the sins accumulated during his previous seven births are eradicated. O son, whatever is only rarely achieved within the three worlds is obtained by him who strictly observes Haribodhini Ekadasi. A person whose sins equal Mount Sumeru in volume sees them all reduced to nothing if he simply fasts on Papaharini Ekadasi (another name for Haribodhini Ekadasi).

The sins a person has accumulated over a thousand previous births are burned to ashes if he not only fasts but also remains awake throughout Ekadasi night, just as a mountain of cotton can be burned to ashes if one lights a small fire in it. O Narada, a person who strictly observes this fast achieves the results I have mentioned. Even if one does a small amount of pious activity on this day, following the rules and regulations, one will earn merit to Mount Sumeru in volume; however a person who does not follow the rules and regulations given in the Scriptures may perform pious activity equal to Mount Sumeru in volume, but he will not earn even a small amount of merit. One who does not chant the Gayatri mantra three times a day, who disregards fast days, who does not believe in God, who criticizes the Vedic Scriptures, who thinks the Vedas bring only ruination to one who follows their injunctions, who enjoys another's wife, who is utterly foolish

and wicked, who does not appreciate any service that has been rendered to him, or who cheats others - such a sinful person can never perform any religious activity effectively. Be he a Brahman or a shudra, whoever tries to enjoy another man's wife, particularly the wife of a twice-born person, is said to be no better than a dog-eater. O best of the sages, any Brahman who enjoys sex with a widow or a Brahman lady married to another man brings ruin to himself and his family. Any Brahman who enjoys illicit sex will have no children in his next life, and any past merit he may have earned is ruined. Indeed, if such a person displays any arrogance toward a twice-born Brahman or a spiritual master, he loses all his spiritual advancement immediately, as well as his wealth and children. These three kinds of men ruin their acquired merits: he whose character is immoral, he who has sex with the wife of a dog-eater, and he who appreciates the association of rogues. Whoever associates with sinful people and visits their homes without a spiritual purpose will go directly to the abode of Lord Yamaraj, the superintendent of death. And if someone eats in such a home, his acquired merit is destroyed, along with his fame, duration of life, children, and happiness. Any sinful person who insults a saintly person soon loses his religiosity, economic development, and sense gratification, and he at last burns in the fire of hell. Anyone who likes to offend saintly persons, or who does not interrupt someone who is insulting saintly persons, is considered no better than an ass.

Such a wicked man sees his dynasty destroyed before his very eyes. A person whose character is unclean, who is a rogue or a swindler, or who always finds fault with others does not achieve a higher destination after death, even if he gives charity generously or performs other pious deed. Therefore one should refrain from performing inauspicious acts and perform only pious ones, by which one will acquire merit and avoid suffering. However, the sins of one who, after due consideration, decides to fast on Haribodhini Ekadasi are erased from one hundred previous lives, and whoever fasts and remains awake overnight on this Ekadasi achieves unlimited merit and after death goes to the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu, and then thousand of his ancestors, relatives, and descendants also reach that abode. Even if one's forefathers were implicated in many sins and are suffering in hell, they still attain beautifully ornamented spiritual bodies and happily go to Vishnu's abode. O Narada, even one who has committed the heinous sin of killing a Brahman is freed of all stains on his character by fasting on Haribodhini Ekadasi

and remaining awake that night. The merit that cannot be won by bathing in all the places of pilgrimage, performing a horse sacrifice, or giving cows, gold, or fertile land in charity can easily be achieved by fasting on this holy day and remaining awake throughout the night. Anyone who observes Haribodhini Ekadasi is celebrated as highly qualified and makes his dynasty famous. As Death is certain, so losing one's wealth is also certain. Knowing this, O best of sages, one should observe a fast on this day so dear to Hari - Sri Haribodhini Ekadasi. All places of pilgrimage in the three worlds at once come to reside in the house of a person who fasts on this Ekadasi. Therefore, to please the Lord, who holds a disc in His hand, one should give up all engagements, surrender, and observe this Ekadasi fast. One who fasts on this Haribodhini day is acknowledged as a wise man, a true yogi, an ascetic, and one whose senses are truly under control. He alone enjoys this world properly, and he will certainly achieve liberation.

This Ekadasi is very dear to Lord Vishnu, and thus it is the very essence of religiosity. Even one observance of it bestows the topmost reward in all the three worlds. O Naradaji, whoever fasts on this Ekadasi will definitely not enter a womb again, and thus faithful devotees of the Supreme Godhead give up all varieties of religion and simply surrender to fasting on this Ekadasi. For that great soul who honors this Ekadasi by fasting and remaining awake throughout the night, the Supreme Lord, Sri Govinda, personally terminates the sinful reactions that soul has acquired by the actions of his mind, body, and words. O son, for anyone who bathes in a place of pilgrimage, gives charity, chants the holy names of the Supreme Lord, undergoes austerities, and performs sacrifices for God on Haribodhini Ekadasi, the merit thus earned all becomes imperishable. A devotee who worships Lord Madhava on this day with first-class paraphernalia becomes free from the great sins of a hundred lifetimes.

A person who observes this fast and worships Lord Vishnu properly is freed from great danger. This Ekadasi fast pleases Lord Janardana so much that He takes the person who observes it back to His abode, and while going there the devotee illuminates then ten universal directions. Whoever desires beauty and happiness should try to honor Haribodhini Ekadasi, especially if it falls on Dvadasi. The sins of one's past hundred births - the sins committed during childhood, youth and old age in all those lifetimes, whether those sins are dry or wet - are nullified by the Supreme Lord Govinda if one fasts on Haribodhini Ekadasi with devotion.

Haribodhini Ekadasi is the best Ekadasi. Nothing is unobtainable or rare in this world for one who fasts on this day, for it gives food grains, great wealth, and high merit, as well as eradication of all sin, the terrible obstacle to liberation. Fasting on this Ekadasi is a thousand times better than giving charity on the day of the solar or lunar eclipse. Again I say to you, O Naradaji, whatever merit is earned by one who bathes in a place of pilgrimage, performs sacrifices, and studies the Vedas is only one then-millionth the merit earned by the person who fasts but one on Haribodhini Ekadasi. Whatever merit one has acquired in his life by some pious activities becomes completely fruitless if one does not observe the Ekadasi fast and worship Lord Vishnu in the month of Kartika. Therefore, you should always worship the Supreme Lord, Janardana, and render service to Him. Thus you will attain the desired goal, the highest perfection. On Haribodhini Ekadasi, a devotee of the Lord should not eat in another's house or eat food cooked by a non devotee. If he does so, he achieves only the merit of fasting on a full moon day. Philosophical discussion of Scriptures in the month of Kartika pleases Sri Vishnu more than if one gives elephants and horses in charity or performs a costly sacrifice. Whoever chants or hears descriptions of Lord Vishnu's qualities and pastimes, even if but a half or even a fourth of a verse, attains the wonderful merit derived from giving away a hundred cows to a Brahman.

O Narada, during the month of Kartika one should give up all kinds of ordinary duties and devote one's full time and energy especially while fasting, to discussing the transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Lord. Such glorification of Sri Hari on the day so dear to the Lord, Ekadasi, liberates a hundred previous generations. One who spends his time enjoying such discussions, especially in the month of Kartika, achieves the results of performing ten thousand fire sacrifices and burns all his sins to ashes. He who hears the wonderful narrations concerning Lord Vishnu, particularly during the month of Kartika, automatically earns the same merit as that bestowed upon someone who donates a hundred cows in charity. O great sage, a person who chants the glories of Lord Hari on Ekadasi achieves the merit earned by donating seven islands. Narada Muni asked his glorious father, O universal sire, best of all demigods, please tell me how to observe this most sacred Ekadasi. What kind of merit does it bestow upon the faithful Lord Brahma replied, O son, a person who wants to observe this Ekadasi should rise early on Ekadasi morning, during the Brahmamuhurta hour (an hour and a half before sunrise until fifty

minutes before sunrise). He should then clean his teeth and bathe in a lake, river, pond, or well, or in his own home, as the situation warrants. After worshipping Lord Sri Keshava, he should listen carefully to the sacred descriptions of the Lord. He should pray to the Lord thus: O Lord Keshava, I shall fast on this day, which is so dear to You, and tomorrow I shall honor Your sacred prasadam. O lotus-eyed Lord, O infallible one; You are my only shelter. Kindly protect me.' Having spoken this solemn prayer before the Lord with great love and devotion, one should fast cheerfully. O Narada, whoever remains awake all night on this Ekadasi, singing beautiful songs glorifying the Lord, dancing in ecstasy, playing delightful instrumental music for His transcendental pleasure, and reciting the pastimes of Lord Krishna as records in bona-fide Vedic literature - such a person will most assuredly reside far beyond the three worlds, in the eternal, spiritual realm of God.

On Haribodhini Ekadasi one should worship Sri Krishna with camphor, fruits, and aromatic flowers, especially the yellow agaru flower. One should not absorb oneself in making money on this important day. In other words, greed should be exchanged for charity. This is the process for turning loss into unlimited merit. One should offer many kinds of fruits to the Lord and bathe Him with water from a conchshell. Each of these devotional practices, when performed on Haribodhini Ekadasi, is ten million times more beneficial than bathing in all the places of pilgrimage and giving all forms of charity. Even Lord Indra joins his palm and offers his obeisances to a devotee who worships Lord Janardana with first-class agastya flowers of this day. The supreme Lord Hari is very pleased when he is decorated with nice agastya flowers.

O Narada, I give liberation to one who devotedly worships Lord Krishna on this Ekadasi in the month of Kartika with leaves of the bel tree. And for one who worships Lord Janardana with fresh tulasi leaves and fragrant flowers during this month, O son, I personally burn to ashes all the sins he has committed for then thousand births. One who merely sees Tulasi Maharani, touches her, mediates on her, narrates her history, offers obeisances to her, prays to her for her grace, plants her, worships her, or waters her lives in the abode of Lord Hari eternally. O Narada, one who serves Tulasi-devi in these nine ways achieves happiness in the higher world for as many thousands of yugas as there are roots and subroots growing from a mature tulasi plant. When a full grown tulasi plant produces seeds, many plants grow from those seeds and spread their branches, twigs, and flowers,

and these flowers also produce numerous seeds. For as many thousands of kalpas as there are seeds produced in this way, the forefathers of one who serves tulasi in these nine ways will live in the abode of Lord Hari.

Those who worship Lord Keshava with kadamba flowers, which are very pleasing to Him, get his mercy and do not see the abode of Yamaraj, death personified. What is the use of worshipping someone else if all desires can be fulfilled by pleasing Lord Hari? For example, a devotee who offers Him bakula, ashoka, and patali flowers is freed from misery and distress for as long as the sun and moon exist in this universe, and at last he achieves liberation. O best of the Brahmanas, an offering of kannera flowers to Lord Jagannatha brings as much mercy upon the devotee as that earned by worshipping Lord Keshava for four yugas. One who offers tulasi flowers (manjaris) to Sri Krishna during the month of Kartika receives more merit than can be obtained by donating ten million cows. Even a devotional offering of newly grown sprouts of grass brings with it a hundred times the benefit obtained by ordinary ritualistic worship of the Supreme Lord. One who worships Lord Vishnu with the leaves of the samika tree is freed from the clutches of Yamaraja, the lord of death.

One who worships Vishnu during the rainy season with champaka or jasmine flowers never returns to the planet earth again. One who worships the Lord with but a single kumbhi flower achieves the boon of donating a pala of gold (two hundred grams). If a devotee offers a single yellow flower of the ketaki, or wood-apple, tree to Lord Vishnu, who rides on Garuda, he is freed from the sins of ten million births. Furthermore, one who offers Lord Jagannatha flowers and also a hundred leaves anointed with red and yellow sandalwood paste will certainly come to reside in Svetadvipa, far beyond the coverings of this material creation. O greatest of Brahmanas, Sri Narada, after thus worshipping Lord Keshava, the bestower of all material and spiritual happiness, on Haribodhini Ekadasi, one should rise early the next day, bathe in a river, chant japa of Krishna's holy names, and render loving devotional service to the Lord at home to the best of one's ability. To break the fast, the devotee should first offer some prasadam to Brahmanas and only then, with their permission, eat some grains. Thereafter, to please the Supreme Lord, the devotee should worship his spiritual master, the purest of the Lord's devotees, and offer him sumptuous food, nice cloth, gold, and cows, according to the devotee's means. This will certainly please the Supreme

Lord, the holder of the disc. Next the devotee should donate a cow to a Brahman, and if the devotee has neglected some rules and regulation of spiritual life, he should confess them before Brahman devotees of the Lord. Then the devotee should offer them some dakshina (money). O king, those who have eaten supper on Ekadasi should feed a Brahman the next day. That is very pleasing to the Supreme Lord. O son, if a man has fasted without asking the permission of his priest, or if a woman has fasted without asking her husband's permission, he or she should donate a bull to a Brahman. Honey and yogurt are also proper gifts for a Brahman. Someone who has fasted from ghee should donate milk, one who has fasted from grains should donate rice, one who has slept on the floor should donate a bedstead with a quilt, one who has eaten on a leaf plate should donate a pot of ghee, one who has remained silent should donate a bell, and one who has fasted from sesame should give gold in charity and feed a Brahman couple with sumptuous food.

A man who wants to prevent baldness should donate a mirror to a Brahman, one who has second-hand shoes should donate shoes, and one who has fasted from salt should donate some sugar to a Brahman. During this month everyone should regularly offer a ghee lamp to Lord Vishnu or to Srimati Tulasidevi in a temple. An Ekadasi fast is complete when one offers a qualified Brahman a gold or copper pot filled with ghee and ghee wicks, along with eight waterpots containing some gold and covered by cloths. One who cannot afford these gifts should at least offer a Brahman some sweet words. One who does so will surely attain the full benefit of fasting on Ekadasi. After offering his obeisance and begging permission, the devotee should eat his meal. On this Ekadasi, Chaturmasya ends, so whatever one gave up during Chaturmasya should now be donated to Brahmanas. One who follows this process of Chaturmasya receives unlimited merit, O king of kings, and goes to the abode of Lord Vasudeva after death. O king, anyone who observes the complete Chaturmasya without a break attains eternal happiness and does not receive another birth. But if someone breaks the fast, he becomes either a blind man or a leper. Thus I have narrated to you the complete process for observing Haribodhini Ekadasi. Someone who reads or hears about this achieves the merit earned by donating cows to a qualified Brahman.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Karttika-sukla Ekadasi - also known as Haribodhini Ekadasi or Devotthaani Ekadasi - from the Skanda Purana.