

25. Padmini Ekadasi - Adik Maas Ekadasi

Yudhishtira Maharaja said, Oh Janardana, what is the name of the Ekadasi that occurs during the light fortnight (*shukla paksha*) of the extra, leap year month? How does one observe it properly? Please narrate all this to me. The Supreme Lord, Lord Sri Krishna, replied the meritorious Ekadasi that occurs during the light fortnight of the extra month of leap year is called Padmini. It is very auspicious. The fortunate soul who observes it with great determination and faith will return to Vishnu Loka. This extra-month Ekadasi is as powerful as I am in nullifying sins. Even four-headed Lord Brahma cannot glorify it sufficiently. Long ago Lord Brahma told Narada about this liberating, sin-removing Ekadasi.

Lord Krishna said: Oh king, please listen carefully as I narrate to you the process of fasting on Padmini Ekadasi, which is rarely done even by great sages. One should begin his fast on the Dashami, the day before Ekadasi, by not eating any *Uraddal*, pink dal, chickpeas, spinach, honey, or sea salt, and also by not dining in homes of others or off bell-metal plates. These eight things should be avoided. One should eat only once on the Dashami, sleep on the ground, and remain celibate. On Ekadasi the devotee should rise early in the morning but should brush his teeth. Then he should thoroughly bathe - in a place of pilgrimage, if possible. While chanting sacred hymns from the Vedas, he should smear his body with cow dung mixed with clay, sesame seed paste, *kusha* grass, and the powder of *Amalaki* fruits. Then the devotee should take another thorough bath, after which he should chant the following prayers: "Oh sacred clay, you have been created by Lord Brahma, purified by Kashyapa Muni, and lifted by Lord Krishna in His form as Varaha, the boar incarnation. Oh clay, please purify my head, eyes, and other limbs. Oh clay, I offer my obeisance unto you. Kindly purify me so I may worship the Supreme Lord, Sri Hari". "Oh cow-dung, you possess medicinal and antiseptic qualities because you have come directly from the stomach of our universal mother, the cow. You can purify the entire planet Earth. Please accept my humble obeisance's and purify me". "Oh *Amalaki* fruits, please accept my humble obeisance's.

You have taken your birth from the saliva of Lord Brahma, and thus by your very presence the entire planet is purified. Kindly cleanse and purify my bodily limbs".

"Oh Supreme Lord Vishnu, Oh God of the gods, Oh master of the universe, Oh holder of the conch, disc, club, and lotus, please allow me to bathe in all the holy places of pilgrimage." Reciting these excellent prayers, chanting mantras to Lord Varuna, and meditating on all the places of pilgrimage located on the banks of the Ganges, one should bathe in whatever body of water is at hand. Then, Oh Yudhishtira, the devotee should rub his body, thus purifying his mouth, back, chest, arms, and waist as a prelude to worshipping the Supreme Lord, who wears brilliant yellow garments and gives pleasure to all creatures. By so doing, the devotee will destroy all his sins.

Afterwards, he should chant the sacred Gayatri mantra, offer oblations to his forefathers, and then enter a Vishnu temple to worship Lord Narayana, the husband of the Goddess of Fortune, Laxmi-devi. If possible, the devotee should then fashion Deities of Sri Sri Radha and Krishna or Shiva and Parvati out of gold and offer them nice devotional worship. He should fill a copper or clay pot with pure water mixed with scents, and then he should cover the pot with a cloth lid and a gold or silver lid, in this way preparing an *Asana* upon which the Radha-Krishna or Shiva-Parvati murthis may sit for worship. According to capacity, the devotee should then worship these *murtis* with fragrant incense, a bright ghee lamp, and sandalwood paste along with camphor, musk, *kumkum*, and other scents, as well as selected aromatic flowers like white lotuses and other seasonal blooms, and also very nicely prepared foods. On this special Ekadasi the devotees should dance and sing ecstatically before the Deity.

He should avoid *prajalpa* (talking unnecessarily of ordinary, mundane conversational topics) at all costs and should not talk to or touch lowborn persons (untrained persons habituated to low acts) or a woman in her menstrual period, or others so absorbed. On this day he should be especially careful to speak the truth and certainly not criticize anyone before the Deity of Lord Vishnu, the Brahmins, or the spiritual master. Rather, with other devotees he should be absorbed in listening to Vaishnavas read the glories of Lord Vishnu from the Puranas. One should not drink or even touch water to his lips on this Ekadasi, and one who is unable to perform this austerity should drink only water or milk. Otherwise, the fast is considered broken.

One should remain awake that Ekadasi night, singing and playing musical instruments for the transcendental pleasure of the Supreme Person. During the first quarter of the Ekadasi night the devotee should offer some coconut meat to his worshippable Deity (*Isthadeva*), during the second part he should offer soothing *belfruit*, during the third part an orange, and as the night draws to a close some betel nut. Remaining awake during the first part of the *Ekadasi* night bestows on the devotee */sadhaka* the same merit as that gained by performing the *Agnistomayajna*. Staying awake during the second part of the night bestows the same merit as that gained by performing a *Vajapeya-yajna*. Stay awake during the third part gives one the same merit as that attained by performing an *Ashvamedhayajna*. And one who remains awake throughout the night receives all of the above mentioned merit, as well as the grand merit of having performed a *RajasUrya-yajna*. Thus there is no better fasting day in the year than Padmini Ekadasi. Nothing can compare to it as a giver of merit, whether it be a fire sacrifice, knowledge, education, or austerity.

Indeed, whoever observes this sacred Ekadasi fast receives all the merit attained by bathing in all the places of pilgrimage in the world. After remaining awake throughout the night, the devotee should bathe at sunrise and then worship Me nicely. He should then feed a qualified Brahmin and respectfully give him the Deity of Lord Keshava and the pot filled with pure scented water. This gift will guarantee the devotee success in this life and liberation in the hereafter. Oh sinless Yudhishtira, as you have requested, I have described the rules and regulations, as well as the benefits, regarding the Ekadasi that occurs during the light fortnight of the extra, leap-year month. Fasting on this Padmini day bestows merit equal to that gained by fasting on all other Ekadasis.

The Ekadasi that occurs during the dark part of the extra month, which is known as Parama Ekadasi, is as powerful at removing sin as this one, Padmini. Now please listen to Me carefully as I narrate to you a fascinating account connected with this sacred day. Pulastya Muni once recited this history to Naradji. Pulastya Muni once had occasion to rescue the ten headed demon Ravana from the prison of Kartavirya, and upon hearing of this event Narada Muni asked his friend, Oh greatest of sages, since this Ravana defeated all the demigods, including Lord Indradev, how could Kartavirya defeat Ravana, who was so skilled in battle? Pulastya Muni replied, Oh great Narada, during the Tretayuga Kartavirya

(Kartavirya's father) took birth in the Haihaya dynasty. His capital city was Mahishmati, and he had one thousand Queens, whom he loved very dearly. None of them, however, was able to give him the son he wanted so badly. He performed sacrifices and worshipped the *devas*(demigods) and forefathers (*pitris*), but due to the curse of some sage he was unable to beget a son - and without a son, a king cannot enjoy his kingdom. King Kartavirya carefully considered his plight and then decided to perform severe austerities to achieve his goal. Thus he donned a loincloth made of bark, grew matted locks, and turned over the reins of his kingdom to his ministers. One of his queens, Padmini - who was born in the Ikshvaku dynasty, who was the best of all women, and who was the daughter of King Harishchandra - saw the king leaving.

She felt that, since she was a chaste wife, her duty was to follow in the footsteps of her beloved husband. Removing all the regal ornaments from her beautiful body and donning but one piece of cloth, she thus followed her husband into the forest. At last Kartavirya reached the summit of Mount Gandhamadana, where he performed severe austerities and penance's for ten thousand years, meditating and praying to Lord Gadadhara, who wields a club. But still he did not get a son. Seeing her dear husband waste away to mere skin and bone, Padmini thought of a solution to the problem. She went to the chaste Anasuya. With great reverence, Padmini said, 'Oh great lady, my dear husband, Kartavirya, has been performing austerities for the last ten thousand years, but Lord Krishna (Keshava), who alone can remove one's past sins and present difficulties, has not yet become pleased with him. Oh most fortunate one, please tell me a fast day we can observe and thus please the Supreme Lord with our devotion, so much so that He will bless me with a nice son who will later rule the world as emperor.' Upon hearing the appealing words of Padmini, who was very chaste and deeply devoted to her husband, the great Anasuya replied to her in a very cheerful mood: 'Oh beautiful, lotus-eyed lady, usually there are twelve months in a year, but after every thirty-two months an extra month is added, and the two Ekadasis that occur during this month are called Padmini Ekadasi and Parama Ekadasi.

They fall on the Dvadasis of the light and dark part of the month, respectively. You should fast on these days and remain awake throughout the night. If you do so, the Supreme Lord, Sri Hari, will bless you with a son. Oh Narada, in this way Anasuya, the daughter of the sage Kardama Muni, explained the potency of these

special Ekadasis. Hearing this, Padmini faithfully followed the instructions to fulfill her desire for a son. Padmini fasted completely, even from water, and remained awake all night, chanting the glories of God and dancing in ecstasy. Lord Keshava thus became most pleased with her devotion and appeared before her, riding on the back of the great Garuda. The Lord said, Oh beautiful one, you have greatly pleased Me by fasting on the special Ekadasi of the extra month of Purushottama. Please ask Me for a benediction. Hearing these sublime words from the overseer of the entire universe, Padmini offered the Supreme Lord devotional prayers and asked Him for the boon her husband desired. Lord Keshava (Krishna) was moved to reply, Oh gentle lady, I am very happy with you, for there is no month dearer to Me than this, and the Ekadasis that occur during this month are the most dear to Me of all Ekadasis.

You have followed My devotee Anasuya's instructions perfectly, and therefore I shall do what will please you. You and your husband will have the desired son that you wish.' The Lord, who removes the distress of the world, then spoke to King Kartavirya: Oh King, please ask of Me any boon that will fulfill your heart's desire, for your dear wife has pleased Me greatly with her devotional fasting. The king was very happy to hear this. Naturally he asked for the son he had desired for so long: Oh master of the universe, Oh killer of the Madhu-demon, kindly grant me a son who will never be conquered by the demigods, human beings, snakes, demons, or hobgoblins, but whom only You can defeat. The Supreme Lord immediately replied, 'So be it!' and disappeared. The king became so very pleased with his wife and returned to his palace in her company. Padmini soon became pregnant, and the mighty-armed Kartavirya appeared as her son. He was the mightiest person in all the three worlds, and thus even the ten-headed Ravana could not defeat him in battle. Except for Lord Narayana, who holds a club, a disc, and other symbols in His hands no one could overcome him. By the merit that resulted from his mother's strict and faithful observance of Padmini Ekadasi, he could defeat even the dreaded Ravana. This is not at all surprising, Oh Naradji, for Kartavirya was the fulfillment of the benediction of the Supreme Lord.

With these words, Pulastya Muni departed. The Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, concluded, 'Oh sinless Yudhishtira, as you have enquired from Me, I have explained to you the power of this special Ekadasi. Oh best of kings, whoever observe this fast will surely attain to Vishnu Loka.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Padmini Ekadasi, the Ekadasi that occurs during the light fortnight of the extra, leap-year month of Purushottama, from the Skanda Purana.