

8. Phalguna-Sukla Ekadasi, Or Amalaki Ekadasi

King Mandhata once said to Vasishtha Muni, "O great sage, kindly be merciful to me and tell me of a holy fast that will benefit me eternally." Vasishtha Muni replied. O king, kindly listen as I describe the best of all fast days, Amalakii Ekadasi. He who faithfully observes a fast on this Ekadasi obtains enormous wealth, gets free of the effects of all kinds of sins, and attains liberation. Fasting on this Ekadasi is more purifying than donating one thousand cows in charity to a pure Brahman.

There was once a kingdom named Vaidika, where all the Brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas, and shudras were equally endowed with Vedic knowledge, great bodily strength, and fine intelligence. Oh lion among kings, the whole kingdom was full of Vedic sounds, not a single person was atheistic, and no one sinned. The ruler of this kingdom was Chitraratha and was very religious and truthful. All the people of the kingdom were devotees of Vishnu and all the people, young, old, women, and men - twice a month everyone fasted on Ekadasi.

Once, in the month of Phalguna (February - March), the holy fast of Amalakii Ekadasi arrived, conjoined with Dvadasi. That day, King Chitraratha and all the citizens observed this sacred Ekadasi very strictly, carefully following all the rules and regulations.

The King along with his citizens went to the temple and offered and installed and worshipped the Amalaki tree with a pot filled with water and worshipped with incense, ghee lamp, plate of sumptuous food and panchratna,etc

Then they prayed, Oh offspring of Lord Brahma, you can destroy all kinds of sinful reactions. Please accept our respectful obeisances and these humble gifts. O Amalakii, you are actually the form of Brahman, and you were once worshiped by Lord Ramachandra Himself. Whoever circumambulates you is therefore immediately freed of all his sins.

After offering these excellent prayers, King Chitraratha and his subjects remained awake throughout the night, praying and worshipping according to the regulations governing a sacred Ekadasi fast. It was during this auspicious time of fasting and prayer that a very irreligious man approached the assembly, a man who maintained himself and his family by killing animals. Burdened with both fatigue and sin, the hunter saw the king and the citizens of Vaidiska observing Amalakii Ekadasi by performing an all-night vigil, fasting, and worshipping Lord Vishnu in the beautiful forest setting, which was brilliantly illuminated by many lamps. Despite himself, that staunchly irreligious killer of innocent birds a

nd animals spent the entire night in great amazement as he watched the Ekadasi celebration and listened to the glorification of the Lord. Soon after sunrise, the king and his royal retinue - including the court sages and all the citizens - completed their observance of Ekadasi and returned to the city of Vaidiska. The hunter then returned to his hut and happily ate his meal. In due time the hunter died, but the merit he had gained by fasting on Amalakii Ekadasi and hearing the glorification of the Supreme Lord, as well as by being forced to stay awake all night, made him eligible to be reborn as a great king endowed with many chariots, elephants, horses, and soldiers. His name was Vasuratha, the son of King Viduratha, and he ruled over the kingdom of Jayanti.

King Vasuratha was strong and fearless, as effulgent as the Sun, and as handsome as the Moon. In strength he was like Sri Vishnu, and in forgiveness like the Earth itself. Very charitable and every truthful, King Vasuratha always rendered loving devotional service to the Supreme Lord, Sri Vishnu. He therefore became very well versed in Vedic knowledge. He performed many kinds of sacrifices, and he always made certain that the needy in his kingdom received enough charity.

One day, while hunting in the jungle, King Vasuratha strayed from the footpath and lost his way. Wandering for some time and eventually growing weary, he paused beneath a tree and, using his arms as a pillow, fell asleep. As he slept, some barbarian tribesmen came upon him and, remembering their longstanding enmity toward the king, began discussing among themselves various ways to kill him.

It is because he killed our fathers, mothers, brothers-in-law, grandsons, nephews, and uncles that we are forced to aimlessly wander like so many madmen in the forest.

So saying, they prepared to kill King Vasuratha with various weapons, including spears, swords, arrows, and mystic ropes. But none of these deadly weapons could even touch the sleeping king, and soon the uncivilized, dog-eating tribesmen grew frightened. Their fear sapped their strength, and before long they lost what little intelligence they had and became almost unconscious with bewilderment and weakness. Suddenly a beautiful woman appeared from the king's body, startling the aborigines. Decorated with many ornaments, emitting a wonderful fragrance, wearing an excellent garland around her neck, her eyebrows drawn in a mood of fierce anger, and her fiery red eyes ablaze, she looked like death personified. With her blazing chakra discus she quickly killed all the tribal hunters, who had tried to slay the sleeping king.

Just then the king awoke, and seeing all the dead tribesmen lying around him, he was astonished. He wondered, 'These are all great enemies of mine! Who has slain them so violently? Who is my great benefactor?

At that very moment he heard a voice from the sky: "You ask who helped you. Well, who is that person who alone can help anyone in distress? He is none other than Sri Keshava, the Supreme Lord, He who saves all who take shelter of Him without any selfish motive." Upon hearing these words, King Vasuratha became over-whelmed with love for the Lord Sri Keshava (Krishna). He returned to his capital city and ruled without any obstacles at all.

Therefore, Oh King, The venerable Vasishtha Muni concluded, ...Anyone who observes this holy Amalakii Ekadasi will undoubtedly attain the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu, so great is the religious merit earned from the observance of this most sacred fast day.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Phalguna-sukla Ekadasi, or Amalaki Ekadasi, from the Brahmanda Purana.