

Nirjala Bhima Ekadashi – [Nir-jala means without water] and Vat Savitree Vratt

Falling in the Jyeshtha Sud-maasa of Panchang tithi.

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*SAMVATSARASYA YA MADHYE EKADASYO BHAVANTI HI TASAM PHALAM
AVAPNOTI PUTRA ME NA ATRA SAMSAYAH ITI MAM KESAVAH PRAHA
SANKHA CAKRA GADADHARAH*

(HARI BHAKTI VILASA 15/25 from PADMA PURANA Vyasadeva speaks to Bhimasena)

“Oh son, Lord Keshava, Who holds the club, disk, conch and lotus flower in His hand, personally told me that all of the merit achieved by fasting on whatever EkAdasis fall in one year can be attained by fasting on this one EkAdasii (nirjala EkAdasii). Of this, there is no doubt.”

Nirjala Bhimshena Ekadashi falls in the month of Jyeshtha in the Shukla paksha (June), therefore it is also called "**Jyeshtha Shukla Ekadashi**" or "**Bhimshena Ekadashi**" (Bhim sen, the second Pandav Brother, had observed this difficult fast). Amongst the 24 Ekadashi's observed throughout the year, the fast (Vrat) observed on Jyeshtha Shukla Ekadashi is considered to be the most beneficially prolific for the soul's onwards journey into the "aartha" meaning fruition of life. Our life here on the human earth becomes fruitful and we become delighted with highest bliss of eternal happiness, purity, and health. "Health" is the profit of old age and one who has good health in old age has reaped the benefits of good deeds, kind deeds, good thoughts, and pure divine intentions.

If one properly observes a fast on this day it is said to give the fruits of 24 Ekadashi observed throughout the year. Complete fast is observed on this day with even water not being taken. People observe strict fast and offer pooja to Lord Vishnu to ensure happiness, prosperity and forgiveness of transgressions and sins. On the preceding day that is on the 10th lunar day, Sandhya (evening prayer) is performed and only one meal is taken. Please DO NOT fast if you are physically unwell or suffer from the symptoms of VATA-PITTA vitiation. One must not fast. The alternative to fasting is to recite the mantra-manjaree jaapams.

1. Recite: Aum shree Ganeshaya namah 108 beads one time
2. "AUM NAMOH BHAGAVATE VASUDEVAYA" 108 beads – 21 times
3. "Aum Namoh Narayanayah" 108 beads once.
4. Gayatri mantra – as many times as one can
5. Swasti Vachanam once.
6. Gita Mahatmya once
7. Shantih pathd.

The story goes:

On Ekadashi auspicious day Bhim set out to take a bath in the river. Mother Kunti reminds Bhim of the ekadashi and reminds him to observe it but Bhim as we all know liked his food too much so he is pleading with his mother and asks her to prepare Khicdi on his return from daily routine, he kept thinking of food and keep convincing himself that he can not fast but the lord had other ideas for him. On the way to the river, Bhim meets with a Siva pujari who is lamenting how difficult it is for him to bring jala for the lord, so he true to pandavas nature obliged to help and he does not do any thing in small measure, he spreads himself across the stream of water diverted it to come pass the temple, he lied there all day thinking of going home and eat but he could not forsake his task and the pujari never came to relieve him.

Once; Bhimasena, the younger brother of Maharaja Yudhisthira, asked the great sage Shrila Vyasa ji, the grandfather of the Pandavas, if it is possible to return to the spiritual world without having observed all the rules and regulations of the Ekadashi fasts.

Bhimasena then spoke as follows, "Oh greatly intelligent and learned grandfather, my brother Yudhisthira, my dear mother Kunti, and my beloved wife Draupadi, as well as Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, fast completely on each Ekadashi and strictly follow all the rules, guidelines and regulative injunctions of that sacred day. Being very religious, they always tell me that I should also fast on that day too. But, Oh learned grandfather, I tell them that I cannot live without eating, because as the son of Vayudeva - Samanaprana, hunger is unbearable to me. I can give widely in charity and worship Lord Keshava properly with all manner of wonderful sadhanas and upacharas (items), but I cannot be asked to fast on Ekadashi. Please tell me how I can obtain the same merits result without fasting."

Hearing these words, the grandsire of Bhima, Srila Vyasa ji said, "If you want to go to the heavenly planets and avoid the hell, you should indeed observe a fast on both the light and dark Ekadashi's."

Bhima replied, "Oh great saintly intelligent grandfather, please listen to my plea. Oh greatest of munis, since I cannot live if I eat only once in a day, how can I possibly live if I fast completely? Within my stomach burns a special fire named Vrika, the fire of digestion. Agni the fire-god, descends from Lord Vishnu through Brahma, from Brahma to Angirasa, from Angirasa to Brihaspathi, and from Brihaspathi to Samyu, who was Agni" father. He is the gatekeeper in charge of Nairriti, the south-eastern direction. He is one of the eight material elements, and Parikshit MahArAja, he is very expert at examining things.

Agni is divided into three categories; Davagni, the fire in wood, JatharAgni, the fire in the digestion in the stomach, and Vadavagni, the fire that creates fog when hot and cold streams mix in for example the ocean. Another name for the fire of digestion is Vrika. It is this powerful fire that resided in Bhima's stomach.

"Only when I eat to my full satisfaction does the fire in my stomach become satisfied. Oh great sage, I might possibly be able to fast only once, so I beg that you tell me of an Ekadashi that is worthy of my fasting and that includes all other Ekadashi's. I shall faithfully observe that fast and hopefully still become eligible for liberation's release."

Shri Vyasa ji replied, "Oh king, you have heard from me about the various kinds of occupational duties, such as elaborate Vedic ceremonies and pujas. In the Kali-yuga, however, no one will be able to observe all these occupational & functional duties properly. I shall therefore tell you how, at practically no expense, one can endure some small austerity and achieve the greatest benefit and resultant happiness. The essence of what is written in the Vedic literatures known as the Puranas is that one should not eat on either the dark or light fortnight Ekadashi's."

As stated in Srimad Bhagavatam (Mahabhagavat Puran)) the Bhagavat Puran is itself the essence or cream of all Vedanta philosophy (sara-vedanta-saram), and the Srimad Bhagavatam's unequivocal message is that of full surrender to Lord Sri Krishna and the rendering of loving devotional service to Him. Observing Ekadashi strictly is a great aid in that process, and here Shri Vyasa ji is simply stressing to Bhima the importance of the Ekadashi vrat. "One who fasts on Ekadashi's is saved from going to the hell".

Hearing Shri Vyasa ji's words, the son of Vayu, Bhimasena, the strongest of all warriors, became frightened and began to shake like a leaf on a banyan tree in a strong wind. The frightened Bhimasena then said, "Oh grandfather, what should I do? I am completely unable and ill equipped to fast twice in a month throughout the year! Please tell me of the one fasting day that will bestow the greatest benefit upon me!"

Vyasa ji replied, "Without drinking even water, you should fast on the Ekadashi that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Jyeshtha (May-June) when the sun travels in the sign of Taurus (Vrishabh) and Gemini (Mithun), According to learned personalities, on this day one may bathe and perform Achaman for prati-prokshana purification. But while performing Achaman one may drink only that amount of water equal to a drop of gold, or that amount it takes to immerse a single mustard seed. Only this amount of water should be placed in the right palm for sipping, which one should form to resemble a cow's ear. If one drinks more water than this, he might as well have drunk wine - despite the soaring heat of summer (in the northern hemisphere and cold in the southern hemisphere).

"One must certainly not eat anything, for if he does so he breaks his fast. This rigid fast is in effect from sunrise on the Ekadashi day to sunrise on the Dwadashi day. If a person endeavors to observe this great fast very strictly, he easily achieves the result of observing all twenty-four other Ekadashi fasts throughout the entire year. On Dwadashi the devotee should bathe early in the morning. Then, according to the prescribed rules, guidelines and regulative injunctions, and of course depending on his ability, he should give some gold and water to worthy brAhmaNas. Finally, he should cheerfully honour prasadam with a brahmana." "Oh Bhimasena, one who can fast on this special Ekadashi in this manner reaps the benefit of having fasted on every Ekadashi during the year. There is no doubt of this, nor should there be. Oh Bhima, now hear the specific merit one gets by fasting on this Ekadashi. The Supreme Lord Keshava, who holds a conch, discus, club and lotus, personally told me, 'Everyone should take shelter of Me and follow My instructions.' Then He told me that one who fasts on this Ekadashi, without taking even drinking water or eating, becomes free of all sinful reactions, and that one who observes the difficult Nirjala fast on Jyeshtha-shukla Ekadashi truly reaps the benefit of all other Ekadashi fasts."

Please do NOT take the literal meaning of these transcripts of anthological stories to the present day world that is guided by IMBALANCE. Therefore, God is ever compassionate and forgiving even to the one who recites his mantras and Kirtans.

"Oh Bhimasena, in the Kali-yuga, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, when all the principles of the Vedas will have been destroyed or greatly minimized, and when there will be no proper charity or observance of the ancient Vedic principles and ceremonies, how will there be any means of purifying the self? But there is the opportunity to fast on Ekadashi and become free of all one's past sins. Oh son of Vayu (air), what more can I say to you? You should not eat during the Ekadashi's that occur during the dark and light fortnights, and you should even give up drinking water (nir = no jalaa= water) on the particularly auspicious Ekadashi day of Jyeshtha-shukla Ekadashi. Oh Vrikodara (voracious eater), whoever fasts on this Ekadashi receives the merits of bathing in all the places of pilgrimage, giving all kinds of charities to worthy persons, and fasting on all the dark and light Ekadashi's throughout the year, in one go. Of this there is no doubt. Oh tiger among men, whoever fasts on this Ekadashi truly becomes a great person and achieves all manner of opulence and wealth, grains, strength, and health. And at the fearful moment of death, the terrible Yamadutas, whose complexions are yellow and black and who brandish huge maces and twirl mystic pasha ropes in the air for binding their victims, will refuse to approach him. Rather, such a faithful soul will at once be taken to the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu by the Vishnu-dutas, whose transcendently beautiful forms are clothed in gorgeous yellowish garments and who each hold a disk, club, conch and lotus in their four hands, resembling Lord Vishnu. It is to gain all these benefits that one should certainly fast on this very auspicious and important Ekadashi, even from water."

When the other Pandavas heard about the benefits to be gained by following Jyeshtha-shukla Ekadashi, they resolved to observe it exactly as their grandfather Srila Vyasa ji had explained it to their brother, Bhimasena. All the five Pandavas observed it by refraining from eating or drinking anything, and thus this day is also known as Pandava Nirjala DvAdashii (technically it is a Maha-DvAdashii).

Very Important note:

One who on this day gives a brahmana a water pot, an umbrella, or shoes surely goes to the heavenly planets. Indeed, he who simply hears these glories also attains to the transcendental abode of the Supreme Lord, Shri Vishnu. Whoever performs the Shraddha ceremony to the forefathers on the dark-moon day called amavasya, particularly if it occurs at the time of a solar eclipse undoubtedly achieves great merit. But this same merit is achieved by him who simply hears this sacred narration - so powerful and so dear to the Lord is this Ekadashi. If nothing else, one should give gold and grains to a Brahmana.

Vat Savitree Vratt

Longevity and good health comes to one who observes the vratt. This word reflects the whole origin and significance of the Vat-Savitri puja. A fasting day for married women, the ritual practiced for Savitri is meant for the well-being and long life of the husband. The fasting is assigned to Savitri and Satyavana her husband who was destined to die within one year but was brought back to life by her severe penance. The God of death, Yama is implored by Savitri when he is about to leave his body and due to her sheer determination and devotion to her husband, she wins him back to life and soon Satayavana regains his lost kingdom. The vrata has been named after Savitri. Savitri was the beautiful daughter of king Aswapati of Madra Desa. She selected Satyawaan as her life's partner, a prince in exile who was living in the forest with his blind father Dyumatsen. She left the palace and lived with her husband and the in-laws in the forest. As a devoted wife and daughter in-law she took all pains to take care of them. One day while cutting wood in the jungle Satyawaan head reeled and he fell down from the tree and then expired on the lap of his beloved wife, Savitri. Then appeared Yamraj, the death God to take away the soul of Satyaban from his body. Savitri, deeply hurt pleaded to Yamraj not to be separated from her husband. If at all he would take away the soul of her husband she would also follow. Yamraj, moved by the devotion of Savitri returned the life of her husband. Satyaban came to life again and both of them lived happily thereafter.

All Hindu women observe this festival worshipping and propitiating Savitri as a Devi. On this day, early morning the women take purificatory bath and wear new clothes, new bangles and apply vermilion on the fore-head and the hair-parting line. Then Savitri is worshiped. Wet pulses and rice, mango, jackel fruit, lemon, banana and several other fruits are offered as Bhoga (offering). After observing fasting for the whole day they simply take the Bhoga. In the afternoon when all formalities of worship are over they bow low to their respective husbands and elderly people.

Conclusion: Dharma means righteousness. Fasting to punish the physical body such that hyper acidity and gastric troubles are created resulting into migraines is not conducive to righteousness. Right conduct, right thoughts, right sacrifice, right donation, right sattvic food, right intention, right brilliant peaceful contented heart, right non-attached spirit free from greed, lust, anger, possessions, obsessions, control and false ownership, right sacrifice to give up all falsities and capture only spiritual light of delight is the essence of dharma.

Divine Love Jyotikar Pattni: AUM PREMAH SHANTIH SWASTIH SHANTIH AUM