

EKADASI – THE DAY OF SREEHARI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- On normal ekadashis fast from beans, grains and cereals.
- On Nirjala ekadashi: Total fasting including fasting from water. (Though complete fasting from food and water on every ekadashi is highly recommended)
- Follow the **4 DONT's**:
 - No rakshasha like activities of eating corpses, drinking dry blood, eating unborn babies and onion & garlic. ("non-veg")
 - No intoxication (no drugs, nicotine <cigs>, caffeine <coffee>, tannin <tea>, alcohol and the like)
 - No gambling (attempts to earn money depending on luck)
 - No illicit sex (basically any form of sex including regulated sex amongst married couple if it is not done with the sole intention of pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead)
- Follow the **3 DOs**:
 - Chant (perform japa meditation) a minimum of "25 rounds" of the "om namo narayanaya" mahamantra OR any vaishnava mantra.
 - Spend a minimum of 2 hours reading spiritual books coming in disciplic-succession.
 - When eating, eat only narayana Prasadam (Food purified by first offering it to Lord srimannarayana)

| | | | |
|--|----------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ekadashi Meditation Lord: | Morning | Lotus | Om Damodaraya Namah |
| | on the | Feet: | |
| | the | Thighs: | Om Madhavaya Namah |
| | Lord: | Private | |
| | | Parts: | Om Kamapataye Namah |
| | | Hips: | Om Vamanaya Namah |
| | | Navel: | Om Padmanabhaya Namah |
| | Stomach: | Om Vishvamutaye Namah | |
| | Heart: | Om Jnanagamyaya Namah | |

Throat: **Om Srikanthaya Namah**
Arms: **Om Sahasrabahave Namah**
Lotus
Eyes: **Om Paramayogine Namah**
Forehead: **Om Urugayai Namah**
Nose: **Om Narakeshvaraya
Namah**
Hair: **Om Sarvakamadaya Namah**
Head: **Om Sahasrashirshaya
Namah**

At Midday: Bathe in river, lake or pond. Chant, while smearing mud upon body: "O Asvakranthe! O Rathakranthe! O Visnukranthe! O Mrttike! O Mother Earth! Kindly remove all the sins I have accumulated throughout many past lives so that I may enter the sacred abode of the Supreme Lord."

The Story of Ekadashi

(This article was originally written in 1956 by Sri Navincandra Cakravarti, a disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur and in 1979 translated into English by Vyenkata das brahmachari.)

Many devotees are very inquisitive about the appearance of Sri Ekadashi and about her special characteristics. Therefore I am presenting this description from the fourteenth chapter of the Padma Purana, from the section entitled "Kriya-sagara-sara."

Once the great sage Jaimini Rsi said to his spiritual master Srila Vyasadeva, "Oh Gurudeva! Previously, by your mercy, you described to me the history of the glories of the Ganga river, the benefits of worshipping Vishnu, the giving of grains in charity, the giving of water in charity, and the magnanimity of drinking the water that has washed the feet of the brahmanas. O best of the sages, Sri Gurudeva, now, with great enthusiasm, I desire to hear the benefits of fasting on Ekadashi and the appearance of Ekadashi.

*kasmad ekadashi jata tasyah ko va vidhir dvija
kada va kriyate kim va phalam kim va vadasva me*

*ka va pujyatama tatra devata sad-gunarnava
akurvatah syat ko dosa etan me vaktum arhasi*

"Oh Gurudeva! When did Ekadashi take birth and from whom did she appear? What are the rules of fasting on the Ekadashi? Please describe the benefits of following this vow and when it should be followed. Who is the utmost worshippable presiding deity of Sri Ekadashi? What are the faults in not following Ekadashi properly? Please bestow your mercy upon me and tell about these subjects, as you are the only personality able to do so."

Srila Vyasadeva, upon hearing this enquiry of Jaimini Rsi, became situated in transcendental bliss. "Oh brahmana sage Jaimini! The results of following Ekadashi can only be perfectly described by the Supreme Lord, Narayana, because Sri Narayana is the only personality capable of describing them in full. But I will give a very brief description in answer to your question."

"At the beginning of the material creation, the Supreme Lord created the moving and nonmoving living entities within this world made of five gross material elements. Simultaneously, for the purpose of punishing the humans beings, He created a personality whose form was the embodiment of sin (Papapurusha). The different limbs of this personality were constructed of the various sinful activities. His head was made of the sin of murdering a brahmana, his two eyes were the form of the sin of drinking intoxicants, his mouth was made of the sin of stealing gold, his ears were the form of the sin of having illicit connection with the spiritual master's wife, his nose of the sin of killing one's wife, his arms the form of the sin of killing a cow, his neck made of the sin of stealing accumulated wealth, his chest of the sin of abortion, his lower chest of the sin of having sex with another's wife, his stomach of the sin of killing one's relatives, his navel of the sin of killing those who are dependent on him, his waist of the sin of self appraisal, his thighs of the sin of offending the guru, his genital of the sin of selling one's daughter, his buttocks of the sin of telling confidential matters, his feet of the sin of killing one's father, and his hair the form of lesser, less severe sinful activities. In this way, a horrible personality embodying all the sinful activities and vices was created. His bodily colour is black, and his eyes are yellow. He inflicts extreme misery upon sinful persons."

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Vishnu, upon seeing this personality of sin, began to think to Himself as follows: 'I am the creator of the miseries and happiness for the living entities. I am their master because I

have created this personality of sin, who gives distress to all dishonest, deceitful, and sinful persons. Now I must create someone who will control this personality.' At this time Sri Bhagavan created the personality known as Yamaraj and the different hellish planetary systems. Those living entities who are very sinful will be sent after death to Yamaraj, who will in turn, according to their sins, send them to a hellish region to suffer.

"After these adjustments had been made, the Supreme Lord, who is the giver of distress and happiness to the living entities, went to the house of Yamaraj, with the help of Garuda, the king of birds. When Yamaraj saw that Lord Vishnu had arrived, he immediately washed His feet and made an offering unto Him. He then had Him sit upon a golden throne. The Supreme Lord, Vishnu, became seated on the throne, whereupon He heard very loud crying sounds coming from the southern direction. He became surprised by this and thus enquired from Yamaraj, 'From where is this loud crying coming?'

"Yamaraj in reply said, 'Oh Deva! The different living entities of the earthly planetary systems have fallen into the hellish regions. They are suffering extremely for their misdeeds. The horrible crying is because of suffering from the inflictions of their past bad karma (actions).'

"After hearing this the Supreme Lord, Vishnu, went to the hellish region to the south. When the inhabitants saw who had come they began to cry even louder. The heart of the Supreme Lord, Vishnu, became filled with compassion. Lord Vishnu thought to Himself, 'I have created all this progeny, and it is because of Me that they are suffering.'"

Srila Vyasadeva continued: "Oh Jaimini, just listen to what the Supreme Lord did next.

*etac canyac ca viprarse
vicintya karunamayah
babhuva sahasa tatra
svayam ekadashi tithih*

'After the merciful Supreme Lord thought over what He had previously considered, He suddenly manifested from His own form the deity of the lunar day Ekadashi.' Afterwards the different sinful living entities began to follow the vow of Ekadashi and were then elevated quickly to the abode of Vaikuntha. Oh my child Jaimini, therefore the lunar day of Ekadashi is the selfsame form of the Supreme Lord, Vishnu, and the Supersoul within the

heart of the living entities. Sri Ekadashi is the utmost pious activity and is situated as the head among all vows.

"Following the ascension of Sri Ekadashi, that personality who is the form of the sinful activity gradually saw the influence she had. He approached Lord Vishnu with doubts in his heart and began offering many prayers, whereupon Lord Vishnu became very pleased and said, 'I have become very pleased by your nice offerings. What boon is it that you want?'

"The Papapurusha replied, 'I am your created progeny, and it is through me that you wanted distress given to the living entities who are very sinful. But now, by the influence of Sri Ekadashi, I have become all but destroyed. Oh Prabhu! After I die all of Your parts and parcels who have accepted material bodies will become liberated and therefore return to the abode of Vaikuntha. If this liberation of all living entities takes place, then who will carry on Your activities? There will be no one to enact the pastimes in the earthly planetary systems! Oh Keshava! If You want these eternal pastimes to carry on, then You please save me from the fear of Ekadashi. No type of pious activity can bind me. But Ekadashi only, being Your own manifested form, can impede me. Out of fear of Sri Ekadashi I have fled and taken shelter of men; animals; insects; hills; trees; moving and nonmoving living entities; rivers; oceans; forests; heavenly, earthly, and hellish planetary systems; demigods; and the Gandarvas. I cannot find a place where I can be free from fear of Sri Ekadashi. Oh my Master! I am a product of Your creation, so therefore very mercifully direct me to a place where I can reside fearlessly.'"

Srila Vyasadeva then said to Jaimini, "After saying this, the embodiment of all sinful activities (Papapurusha) fell down at the feet of the Supreme Lord, Vishnu, who is the destroyer of all miseries and began to cry.

"After this, Lord Vishnu, observing the condition of the Papapurusha with laughter, began to speak thus: 'Oh Papapurusha! Rise up! Don't lament any longer. Just listen, and I'll tell you where you can stay on the auspicious lunar day of Ekadashi. On the day of Ekadashi, which is the benefactor of the three worlds, you can take shelter of foodstuff in the form of grains. There is no reason to worry about this any more, because My form as Sri Ekadashi Devi will no longer impede you.' After giving direction to the Papapurusha, the Supreme Lord, Vishnu, disappeared and the Papapurusha returned to the performance of his own activities.

"Therefore those persons who are serious about the ultimate benefit for the soul will never eat grains on the Ekadashi tithi. According to the instructions of Lord Vishnu, every kind of sinful activity that can be found in the material world takes its residence in this place of foodstuff (grain). Whoever follows Ekadashi is freed from all sins and never enters into hellish regions. If one doesn't follow Ekadashi because of illusion, he is still considered the utmost sinner. For every mouthful of grain that is eaten by a resident of the earthly region, one receives the effect of killing millions of brahmanas. It is definitely necessary that one give up eating grains on Ekadashi. I very strongly say again and again, 'On Ekadashi, don't eat grains, don't eat grains, don't eat grains!' Whether one be a ksatriya, vaisya, shudra, or of any family, he should follow the lunar day of Ekadashi. From this the perfection of varna and ashram will be attained. Especially since even if one by trickery follows Ekadashi, all of his sin become destroyed and he very easily attains the supreme goal, the abode of Vaikuntha."

Rules for Ekadashi

Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada makes an interesting comment in his purport to Sri Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya lila. 9-24-342:

"You should recommend the avoidance of mixed Ekadashi and the performance of pure Ekadashi. You should also describe the fault in not observing this. One should be very careful as far as these items are concerned. If one is not careful, one will be negligent in executing devotional service."

Vratas - what to do / austerities:
From Pancharatra Pradipa - Appendix 3

Notes on Ekadashi...

The Hari-bhakti-vilasa gives many rules for observing Ekadashi..., and these are discussed at length in Volume II of Pancharata-Pradipa. Here, however, we will mention only a few points concerning Ekadashi in relation to general standards of Deity worship.

Devotee: On Ekadashi, we can offer the Deity grains?

Prabhupada: Oh, yes. But not guru. Ekadashi is observed by jiva-tattva, not by Vishnu. We are fasting for clearing our material disease, but Radha-Krishna, Caitanya Mahaprabhu . . . Caitanya Mahaprabhu also may not be offered grains because He is playing the part of a devotee. Only Radha-Krishna, Jagannatha can be offered grains. Otherwise, Guru-Gauranga, no. And the prasada should not be taken by anyone. It should be kept for the next day. [Srila Prabhupada Room Conversation, Tokyo, April 22, 1972]

If there is only one plate for all Deities and the main Deity is Krishna or Jagannatha, grains should be offered as on normal days. If the main Deities are Gaura-Nitai, offer only non-grain preparations.* It is best to replace the normally offered grain preparations with non-grain preparations so that there are the same number of preparations as on normal days. If, however, grain preparations are being cooked for Krishna or Jagannatha, it may be difficult to cook additional non-grain preparations for the spiritual master and Gaura-Nitai. In that case serve larger quantities of the non-grain preparations to the spiritual master and Gaura-Nitai, and prepare the offering plate for Krishna or Jagannatha as on normal days.

What Constitutes "Grains" on Ekadashi?

Srila Prabhupada specified foodgrains and beans (pulses) as foods that must be avoided on Ekadashi. One may use spices for cooking, although mustard seeds should be avoided.* You should not use powdered asafatoeda (hing), since it (generally) contains grains. Sesame seeds are also to be avoided, except on Satila Ekadashi, when they may be offered and eaten.

Do not use any cooking ingredients that might be mixed with grains, such as ghee that has been used to fry puris, or spices touched by hands dusted with chapati flour. There is absolutely NO doubt about what is NOT permissible to eat on Ekadashi. ANNA. However it is how you translate this word that makes the difference. I once again submit what Pradyumna Prabhu told me Srila Prabhupada told him many years ago. When asked by Pradyumna what we could eat Srila Prabhupada said "Fruits, Roots, Nuts, Milk". If you stick to these types of foods you should be fine. Of course the sure way is to fast completely. Water of course can be taken. Except if you wish to do Nirjala.

* Someone who is very strictly observing Ekadashi should avoid all spices except pepper, rock salt and cumin. He should also eschew certain vegetables, such as tomatoes, cauliflower, eggplant, and leafy vegetables.

Temple kitchens need not follow these strictures, since Srila Prabhupada did not establish them. Individual devotees may observe these rules if they choose, either making their own arrangements for cooking on Ekadashi, eating uncooked foods such as fruit, or observing full fasting. These arrangements should not interfere with the temple cooking schedule.

Mahaprasad on Ekadashi:

On Ekadashi, strict followers of Vaishnava regulations avoid eating any mahaprasad from an offering that includes grains. The shastra explains that the papa-purusha (sin personified) takes shelter in grains on Ekadashi, and therefore we avoid grains at all cost on that day, not even risking taking non-grain preparations of mahaprasad from an offering plate containing grains. Ekadashi mahaprasad should be stored until the next day; if that is not possible it can be distributed to persons not strictly following Vaishnava regulations or to animals. In fact, mahaprasad maintains its purity on Ekadashi despite the presence of the papa-purusha, and therefore it will purify anyone who eats it. Nevertheless, the followers of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, being strict followers of Vaishnava regulations, avoid mahaprasad on that day because their strict sadhana will be hampered by the presence of the papa-purusha.

Dvadashi (the day after ekadasi - the day of breaking the Ekadashi Fast):

(To observe Ekadashi properly, one should strictly observe the breaking of this fast.)

One should break the fast after the sunrise of the dvadasi, after the first quarter of the *dvadashi tithi* has passed, but before the *dvadashi tithi* has ended. (timings can be found out from the free [downloadable calendar](#))

After taking morning bath, one should offer the *upavasa* to the Lord:

*ajnana timirandhasya vratenanena kesava
prasida sumukho natha jnana drsti bhava*

"Oh Kesava, be pleased with this vrata performed by one fallen in the modes of darkness. Oh Lord, bestow your glance of knowledge upon me."

One should observe similar rules as on *dashami*. For health and common sense, what to speak of spiritual development, it is wise to eat only once going into a fast and coming out of a fast. The meal should also be light.

From an Ayurvedic perspective, especially if one is fasting entirely, or even just taking water, the malas (stools) absorb the toxins in the body when fasting. So on the day the fast is broken it is a good idea to take a gentle laxative consisting of 50-50 warm milk and water, with some rock candy to sweeten it. Generally 4-5 cups are drunk (up to 7) and within half an hour to an hour one will expel the malas. After this at lunch time one takes one's meal of *prasadam*.

One should not bathe the deity on the *dvadashi* day, but bathe the Lord in ghee in the night. But if one does, then it should be performed before sunrise.

Mahadvadasi:

Sometimes, due to the manner in which the *ekadashi tithi* and the *dvadashi tithis* are positioned in relation to the sunrise (there are six different cases), the *vrata* is observed on the *dvadashi* and the fast is broken the next day, the *trayodashi*. Such a fast day is called a *mahadvadashi*, to distinguish it from a regular *dvadashi*, which is the day to break the *ekadashi* fast.

EKADASI STORIES

| # | Ekadashi |
|-----|-----------------------|
| 1. | <u>Saphala</u> |
| 2. | <u>PutradA</u> |
| 3. | <u>Sat-tila</u> |
| 4. | <u>Bhaimi</u> |
| 5. | Vijaya |
| 6. | <u>Amalaki</u> |
| 7. | <u>Papamochani</u> |
| 8. | <u>Kamada</u> |
| 9. | <u>Varuthini</u> |
| 10. | <u>Mohini</u> |
| 11. | <u>Apara</u> |
| 12. | <u>Pandava</u> |
| 13. | <u>Yogini</u> |
| 14. | <u>Sayana / Padma</u> |
| 15. | <u>Kamika</u> |
| 16. | <u>Pavitropana</u> |
| 17. | <u>Annada</u> |
| 18. | <u>Parsva</u> |
| 19. | <u>Indira</u> |
| 20. | <u>Padmini</u> |
| 21. | <u>Parama</u> |
| 22. | <u>PAAsaNkusha</u> |
| 23. | <u>ramA</u> |
| 24. | <u>Utthana</u> |
| 25. | <u>Utpanna</u> |
| 26. | <u>Mokshada</u> |

1. SAPHALAA EKADASI:

Yudhisthira Maharaj said, “O my Dear Lord Sri Krishna, what is the name of that Ekadasi that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Pausha (December-January)? How is it observed, and which Deity is to be worshipped on that sacred day? Please narrate these details to me fully, so that I may understand Oh Janardana.” The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna then replied, “O best of kings, because you desire to hear, I shall fully describe to you the glories of the Pausha-krishna Ekadasi.

“I do not become as pleased by sacrifice or charity as I do by My devotee's observance of a full fast on Ekadasi. To the best of one's ability, therefore, one should fast on Ekadasi, the day of Lord Hari.

“O Yudhisthira, I urge you to hear with undivided intelligence the glories of Pausha-krishna Ekadasi, which falls on a Dwadasi. As I explained previously, one should not differentiate among the many Ekadasis. O king, to benefit humanity at large I shall now describe to you the process of observing Pausha-krishna Ekadasi.

“Pausha-krishna Ekadasi is also known as Saphalaa Ekadasi. On this sacred day one should worship Lord Narayana, for He is its ruling Deity. One should do so by follow the previously described method of fasting. Just as among snakes Shesha-naga is the best, and among birds Garuda is the best, among sacrifices the Ashvamedha-yajna is the best, among rivers Mother Ganges is the best, among gods Lord Vishnu is best, and among two-legged beings the brahmins are the best, so among all fasting days Ekadasi is by far the best. O foremost of kings who took your birth in the Bharata dynasty, whoever strictly observes Ekadasi becomes very dear to Me and indeed worshipable by Me in every way. Now please listen as I describe the process for observing Saphalaa Ekadasi. “On Saphalaa Ekadasi My devotee should worship Me by offering Me fresh fruits according to time, place and circumstance, and by meditating on Me as the all-auspicious Supreme Personality of Godhead. He should offer Me jaambira fruit, pomegranate, betal nuts and leaves, coconut, guava, varieties of nuts, cloves, mangoes, and

different kinds of aromatic spices. He should also offer Me incense and bright ghee lamps, for such an offering of lamps on Saphalaa Ekadasi is especially glorious. The devotee should try to stay awake the Ekadasi night.

“Now please hear with undivided attention as I tell you how much merit one gets if he fasts and remains awake throughout the entire night singing and chanting the glories of Narayana. O best of kings, there is no sacrifice or pilgrimage that yields merit that is equal to or better than the merit one gains by fasting on this Saphalaa Ekadasi. Such fasting – particularly if one can remain awake and alert the entire night long – bestows the same merit upon the faithful devotee as the performance of austerity for five thousand earthly years. O lion among kings, please hear from Me the glorious history that made this Divine Ekadasi famous.

“Once there was a City called Champaavati, which was ruled by the saintly King Maahishmata. He had four sons, the eldest of whom, Lumpaka, always engaged in all manner of very sinful activities – illicit sexual encounters with the wives of others, gambling, and continual association with known prostitutes. His evil deeds gradually reduced the wealth of his father, King Maahishmata. Lumpaka also became very critical of the numerous devas, the empowered universal attendants of the Lord, as well as toward the brahmins, and every day he would go out of his way to blaspheme the Vaishnavas. At last King Maahishmata, seeing the unrepentant brazen fallen condition of his son, exiled him to the forest. Out of fear of the king, even compassionate relatives didn’t come to Lumpaka’s defense, so angry was the king toward his son, and so sinful was this Lumpaka.

“Bewildered in his exile, the fallen and rejected Lumpaka thought to himself, ‘My father has sent me away, and even my kinsmen do not raise but a finger in objection. What am I to do now?’ He schemed sinfully and thought, ‘I shall sneak back to the city under cover of darkness and plunder its wealth. During the day I shall stay in the forest, and as night returns, so shall I to the city.’ So thinking, the sinful Lumpaka entered the darkness of the forest. He killed many animals by day, and by night he stole all manner of valuable items from the city. The city-dwelling folk apprehended him several times, but out of fear of the king they left him alone. They thought to themselves that it must have been the accumulated sins of Lumpaka’s previous births that had forced him to act in such a way that he lost his royal facilities and became to act so sinfully like a common selfish thief.

“Though a meat-eater, Lumpaka would also eat fruits every day. He resided under an old banyan tree that unknown to him happened to be very dear to Lord Vaasudeva. Indeed, many worshipped as the demi-god (representative departmental head) of all the trees in the forest. In due course of time, while Lumpaka was doing so many sinful and condemnable activities, the Saphalaa Ekadasi arrived. On the eve of the Ekadasi (Dasami) Lumpaka had to pass the entire night without sleep because of severe cold that he felt due to his scanty bedclothes (bedding). The cold not only robbed him of all peace but almost of his very life. By the time the sun rose, near dead, his teeth chattering and near comatose. In fact all that Ekadasi morning, he remained in that stupor and could not awaken out of his near comatose condition.

“When midday of the Saphalaa Ekadasi arrived, the sinful Lumpaka finally came to and managed to rise up from his place under that banyan tree. But with every step he took, he stumbled and fell to the ground. Like a lame man, he walked slowly and hesitantly, suffering greatly from hunger and thirst in the midst of the jungle. So weak was Lumpaka that he couldn’t even concentrate to nor muster strength to go and kill even a single animal that whole day. Instead, he was reduced to collecting whatever fruits had fallen to the ground of their own accord. By the time he returned to his banyan tree home, the sun had set.

“Placing the fruits on the ground next to him (at the base of the sacred banyan tree), Lumpaka began to cry out, ‘O, woe is me ! What should I do ? Dear father, what is to become of me? O Sri Hari, please be merciful to me and accept these fruits as an offering !’ Again he was forced to lie awake the whole night without sleep, but in the meantime the all merciful Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Madhusudana, had become pleased with Lumpaka’s humble offering of forest fruits, and He accepted them. Lumpaka had unwittingly observed a full Ekadasi fast, and by the merit he reaped on that day he regained his kingdom with no further obstacles. “Listen, O Yudhishthira, to what happened to the son of King Maahishmata when but a fragment of the merit spouted up within his heart.

“As the Sun beautifully rose in the sky on the day following Ekadasi, a handsome horse approached Lumpaka as if seeking him out, and stood next to him. At the same time, a voice suddenly boomed out from the clear blue sky saying, ‘This horse is for you, Lumpaka! Mount it and ride swiftly out of this forest to greet you family! O son of King Maahishmata, by the mercy of

the Supreme lord Vaasudeva and the strength of the merit you acquired by observing Saphalaa Ekadasi, your kingdom will be returned to you without any further hindrances. Such is the benefit you have gained by fasting on this most auspicious of days. Go now, to you father and enjoy your rightful place in the dynasty.’ “Upon hearing these celestial words resounding from above, Lumpaka mounted the horse and rode back to the city of Champaavati. By the merit he had accrued by fasting on Saphalaa Ekadasi, he had become a handsome prince once more and was able to absorb his mind in the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari. In other words, he had become My pure devotee.

“Lumpaka offered his father, King Maahishmata, his humble obeisances and once more accepted his princely responsibilities. Seeing his son so decorated with Vaishnava ornaments and tilak (udhvara pundra) King Maahishmata gave him the kingdom, and Lumpaka ruled unopposed for many, many years. Whenever the Ekadasi came, he worshipped the Supreme Lord Narayana with great devotion. And by the mercy of Sri Krishna he obtained a beautiful wife and a fine son. In old age Lumpaka handed his kingdom over to his son – just as his own father, King Maahishmata, had handed it over to him. Lumpaka then went to the forest to dedicate his concentrate attention to gratefully serve the Supreme Lord with controlled mind and senses. Purified of all material desires, he left his old material body and returned back to home, back to Godhead, attaining a place near the lotus feet of his worshipful Lord, Sri Krishna.

“O Yudhisthira, one who approaches Me as Lumpaka did will become completely free of lamentation and anxiety. Indeed, anyone who properly observes this glorious Saphalaa Ekadasi – even unknowingly, like Lumpaka – will become famous in this world. He will become perfectly liberated at death and return to the spiritual abode of Vaikuntha. Of this there is no doubt. Moreover, one who simply hears the glories of Saphalaa Ekadasi obtains the same merit derived by one who performs a Rajasurya-yajna, and at the very least he goes to heaven in his next birth, so where is the loss?”

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Pausha-krishna Ekadasi, or Saphalaa Ekadasi, from the Bhavishya-uttara Purana.

2. **PUTRADA EKADASI:**

The pious and saintly Yudhisthira Maharaj said, “Oh Lord, You have so nicely explained to us the wonderful glories of the Saphalaa Ekaadasi, which occurs during the dark fortnight (Krishna paksha) of the month of Pausha (December – January). Now please be merciful to me and explain to me the details of the Ekaadasi that occurs in the light fortnight (Shukla or Gaura paksha) of this month. What is its name, and what Deity is to be worshipped on that sacred day? Oh Purushottama, Oh Hrishiksha, please also tell me how You can be pleased on this day? Lord Sri Krishna then replied, “Oh saintly king, for the benefit of all humanity I shall now tell you how to observe fasting on the Pausha-shukla Ekaadasi.

As previously explained, everyone should observe the rules and regulations of the Ekaadasi vrata, to the very best of their ability. This injunction also applies to the Ekaadasi named Putradaa, which destroys all sins and elevates one to the spiritual abode. The Supreme Personality of Godhead Shri Narayana, the original personality, is the worshipable Deity of the Ekaadasi, and for His faithful devotees He happily fulfils all desires and awards full perfection. Thus among all the animate and inanimate beings in the three worlds (lower, middle and higher planetary systems), there is no better personality than Lord Narayana.

“Oh King, now I shall narrate to you the history of Putradaa Ekaadasi, which removes all kinds of sins and makes one famous and learned. “There was once a kingdom named Bhadraavati, which was ruled by King Suketumaan. His queen was the famous Shaibyaa. Because he had no son, he spent a long time in anxiety, thinking, ‘If I have no son, who will carry on my dynasty?’ In this way the king meditated in a religious attitude for a very long time, thinking, ‘Where should I go? What should I do? How can I get a pious son (putra)? In this way King Suketumaan could find no happiness anywhere in his kingdom, even in his own palace, and soon he was spending more and more time inside his wife’s palace, gloomily thinking only of how he could get a son. “Thus both King Suketumaan and Queen Shaibyaa were in great distress. Even when they offered tarpana (oblations of water to their forefathers), their mutual misery made them think that it was as undrinkable as boiling water. They thus thought that they would have no descendents to offer tarpana to them when they died and thus become lost souls (ghosts).

The king and queen were especially upset to learn that their forefathers were worried that soon there would be no one to offer them tarpana also. “After learning of their forefather’s unhappiness, the king and queen became more and more miserable, and neither ministers, nor friends, nor even loved ones could cheer them up. To the king, his elephants and horses and infantry were no solace, and at last he became practically inert and helpless. “The king thought to himself, ‘It is said that without a son, marriage is wasted. Indeed, for a family man with no son, both his heart and his splendid house remain vacant and miserable. Bereft of a son, a man cannot liquidate the debts that he owes his forefathers, the demigods (devas) and to other human beings. Therefore every married man should endeavor to beget a son; thus he will become famous within this world and at last attain the auspicious celestial realms. A son is proof of the pious activities a man performed in his past one hundred lifetimes, and such a person achieves a long duration of life in this world, along with good health and great wealth. Possessing sons and grandsons in this lifetime proves that one has worshipped Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in the past. The great blessing of sons, wealth, and sharp intelligence can be achieved only by worshipping the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna. That is my opinion.’ “Thinking thus, the king had no peace. He remained in anxiety day and night, from morning to evening, and from the time he lay down to sleep at night until the sun rose in the morning, his dreams were equally full of great anxiety. Suffering such constant anxiety and apprehension, King Suketumaan decided to end his misery by committing suicide. But he realized that suicide throws a person into hellish conditions of rebirth, and so he abandoned that idea. Seeing that he was gradually destroying himself by his all consuming anxiety over the lack of a son, the king at last mounted his horse and left for the dense forest alone. No one, not even the priests and brahmins of the palace, knew where he had gone. “In that forest, which was filled with deer and birds and other animals, King Suketumaan wandered aimlessly, noting all the different kinds of trees and shrubs, such as the fig, bel fruit, date palm, jackfruit, bakula, saptaparnaa, tinduka, and tilaka, as well as the shala, taala, tamaala, saralaa, hingotaa, arjuna, labheraa, bahedaa, sallaki, karondaa, patala, khaira, shaka, and palaasha trees. All were beautifully decorated with fruits and flowers. He saw deer, tigers, wild boar, lions, monkeys, snakes, huge bull elephants in a rut, cow elephants with their calves, and four-tusked elephants with their mates close by. There were cows, jackals, rabbits, leopards, and hippopotamuses. Beholding all these animals accompanied by their mates and offspring, the king remembered his own menagerie, especially his palace elephants, and became so sad that he absentmindedly wandered into

their very midst. “Suddenly the king heard a jackal howl in the distance. Startled, he began wandering about, looking around in all directions. Soon it was midday, and the king started to tire. He was tormented by hunger and thirst also. He thought, ‘What sinful deed could possibly have done so that I am now forced to suffer like this, with my throat parched and burning, and my stomach empty and rumbling? I have pleased the devas (demigods) with numerous fire sacrifices and abundant devotional worship. I have given many gifts and delicious sweets in charity to all the worthy brahmins too. And I have taken care of my subjects as though they were my very own children. Why then am I suffering so? What unknown sins have come to bear fruit and torment me in this dreadful way?’ “Absorbed in these thoughts, King Suketumaan struggled forward, and eventually, due to his pious credits, he came upon a beautiful lotus bearing pond that resembled the famous Lake Maanasarova. It was filled with aquatics, including crocodiles and many varieties of fish, and graced with varieties of lilies and lotuses. The beautiful lotuses had opened to the Sun, and swans, cranes and ducks swam happily in its waters. Nearby were many attractive ashramas, where there resided many saints and sages who could fulfill the desires of anyone. Indeed, they wished everyone well. When the king saw all this, his right arm and right eye began to quiver, a sakuna sign (for a male) that something auspicious was about to happen. “As the king dismounted his horse and stood before the sages, who sat on the shore of the pond, he saw that they were chanting the holy names of God on japa beads. The king paid his obeisances and, joining his palms, addressed them with glorified praises. Observing the respect the king offered them, the sages said, ‘We are very pleased with you, Oh king. Kindly tell us why you have come here. What is on your mind? Please inform us what is your heart’s desire.’ “The king replied, ‘Oh great sages, who are you? What are your names, surely your presence reveals that you are auspicious saints? Why have you come to this beautiful place? Please tell me everything.’

“The sages replied, ‘Oh king, we are known as the ten Vishvadevas (the sons of Vishva; Vasu, Satya, Kratu, Daksha, Kaala, Kaama, Dhriti, Pururavaa, Maadrava, and Kuru). We have come here to this very lovely pond to bathe. The month of Magha (Madhava mase) will soon be here in five days (from the Magh nakshatra), and today is the famous Putradaa Ekaadasii. One who desires a son should strictly observe this particular Ekaadasii.’ “The king said, ‘I have tried so hard to have a son. If you great sages are pleased with me, kindly grant the boon of having a good son (putra).’

“ ‘The very meaning of Putradaa,’ the sages replied, ‘...is “giver of a putra, pious son.” So please observe a complete fast on this Ekaadasii day. If you do so, then by our blessing – and by the mercy of Lord Sri Keshava invested in us – surely you will obtain a son.’

“On the advice of the Vishvadevas, the king observed the auspicious fast day of Putradaa Ekaadasii according to the established rules and regulations, and on the Dvaasasii, after breaking his fast, he paid obeisances again and again to all of them. “Soon after Suketumaan returned to his palace and united with his queen. Queen Shaibya immediately became pregnant, and exactly as the Vishvadevas had predicted, a bright faced, beautiful son was born to them. In due course of time he became famous as an heroic prince, and the king gladly pleased his noble son by making him his successor. The son of Suketumaan took care of his subjects very conscientiously, just as if they were his own children. “In conclusion, Oh Yudhisthira, one who wishes to fulfill his desires should strictly observe Putradaa Ekaadasii. While on this planet, one who strictly observes this Ekaadasii will surely obtain a son, and after death he will achieve liberation. Anyone who even reads or hears the glories of Putradaa Ekaadasii obtains the merit earned by performing an horse sacrifice. It is to benefit all humanity that I have explained all this to you.”

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Pausha-shukla Ekaadasii, or Putradaa Ekaadasii, from the Bhavishya Purana of Veda Vyaasadeva.

3. **SAT-TILA EKADASI:**

Sri Daalbhya Rishi said to Palastya Muni, "When the spirit soul comes in contact with the material energy, he immediately begins to perform sinful activities, such as stealing, killing, and illicit sex. He may even perform many other terrible deeds, such as killing a brahmin. Oh purest of personalities, please tell me how these unfortunate souls may escape the punishment of being sent to hellish regions of creation. Kindly inform me how, by giving even a little in charity, one may be easily released from the reactions of his sins."

Pulastya Muni replied, "Oh fortunate one, you have asked me an important and confidential question, which not even Brahmaa, Vishnu, Shiva or Indra has ever asked. Please listen very carefully to my answer.

"With the arrival of the month of Magh (January - February), one should bathe, carefully control his senses by giving up lust, anger, pride, jealousy, faultfinding, and greed, and meditate on the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Sri Krishna. One should then gather up some cow dung before it touches the ground and, after mixing it with sesame seeds and cotton, form 108 balls. This should be done on the day when the constellation of Purva-ashadha nakshatra arrives. then one should follow the rules and regulations of Sri Ekaadasii, which I shall now explain to you.

"After bathing, the person who intends to observe Ekaadasii should worship the Supreme Lord. While praying to Lord Sri Krishna by chanting His holy name, he should promise to observe the Ekaadasii fast. He should remain awake overnight and perform a homa (fire sacrifice). Then the devotee should perform an Arati ceremony for the pleasure of the Lord - Who holds a conch, disk, club, and so on in His hands - offering Him sandalwood paste to his feet, incense, camphor, a bright ghee lamp, and delicious food preparations. Next the devotee should offer the 108 balls of cow dung, sesame seeds, and cotton wool into the sacred fire whilst chanting such holy names of the Lord as Purusha sukta, and other names. Throughout the whole day and night he should also observe the standard Ekaadasii vrata (fast, which in this case is a fast from all kinds of grains and beans). On this occasion one should offer the Lord - pumpkin, coconut, and guava. If these items are unavailable, betel nut may be substituted.

"The devotee should pray to Lord Sri Janardana, the benefactor of all living beings, in this way; 'Oh Lord Sri Krishna, You are the most merciful Personality of Godhead and the giver of liberation to all fallen souls. Oh Lord, we have fallen into the ocean of material existence. Please be kind to us. Oh lotus-eyed divinity, please accept our most humble, affectionate and respectful obeisances. Oh protector of the entire world, we offer You our humble respects again and again. Oh Supreme Spirit, Oh Supreme One, Oh source of all our forefathers, may You and Your eternal consort, Srimati Laxmi-devi, please accept these humble offerings.'

"The devotee should then try to please a qualified brahmin with a warm welcome, a pot full of water (purna kumbha), an umbrella, a pair of shoes, and clothes (cloth - dhoti, and anga vaastra), requesting him at the same time to bestow his blessings, by which one may develop unalloyed love for Lord Sri Krishna. According to one's ability, one may also donate a black cow to

such a brahmin, particularly to one who is very well versed in all the injunctions of the Vedic scriptures. One should also offer him a pot full of sesame seeds.

"Oh exalted Daalbhya Muni, black sesame seeds are especially suitable for formal worship and fire sacrifices while white or brown ones are meant to be eaten by a qualified brahmin. One who can arrange to give both kinds of sesame seeds (black and white or brown) especially on this Sat-tilaa Ekaadasii day will be promoted to at least the heavenly planets after leaving this present body, for as many thousands of years as the number of seeds that would be produced if the seeds he donated were sown in the ground and grew into mature, seed bearing plants.

"On this Ekaadasii a faithful person should

- (1) bathe in the water mixed with sesame seeds,
- (2) rub sesame seed paste on his body,
- (3) offer sesame seeds into the fire in sacrifice,
- (4) eat sesame seeds,
- (5) give sesame seeds away in charity,
- (6) accept charitable gifts of sesame seeds.

These are the six (sat) ways in which sesame seeds (tilaa) are utilised for spiritual purification on this Ekaadasii. Therefore it is called Sat-tilaa Ekaadasii.

"The great Devarishi Naarad Muni once asked the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, 'Oh mighty armed Lord, Oh You who are so affectionate to Your loving devotees, please accept my most humble obeisances. Oh Yaadava, kindly tell me the result one obtains by observing Sat-tilaa Ekaadasii.'

"Lord Sri Krishna replied, 'Oh best of the twice born brahmins, I shall narrate to you an account of an incident I personally witnessed. Long ago on earth there lived an old female brahmini who worshipped Me every day with controlled senses. She very faithfully observed many a fast, especially on special days honouring Me (My various appearance days Janmaasthami, Rama-navami, Vaman Dwadasi, Nrisimha Chaturdasi, Varaha Dwadasi, Gaura Purnima, etc.) and served Me with full devotion, devoid of any personal motive. Her rigorous fasting made her quite weak and thin. She

gave charity to brahmanas and to young maidens (kanyas), and even planned to give away her house in charity. Oh best of the brahmanas although this spiritually minded woman gave charitable donations to worthy people, the odd feature of her austerity was that she never gave food to brahmanas or the devas (demigods).

"I began to reflect on this curious omission: "This fine woman has purified herself by fasting on all the auspicious occasions and by offering Me strict devotional worship. Therefore she certainly has become eligible to enter My personal abode, which is unattainable by ordinary persons." So I came down to this planet to examine her, disguising Myself as a follower of Lord Shiva's, complete with a garland of skulls draped around My neck and a begging pot (kumandalu) in My hand.

"As I approached her, she said to Me, "Oh respectful one, tell me truthfully why You have come before me."

"I replied, "Oh beautiful one, I have come to get some sacred alms from you" - whereupon she angrily threw a dense lump of mud into My begging pot! Oh Naarada Muni I simply turned around and went back to My personal abode, astonished at this fine brahmani's peculiar mixture of great magnanimity and stinginess.

"At last this austere lady reached the spiritual world in her self-same body, so great were her efforts at fasting and charity. And because she had indeed offered Me a lump of mud, I transformed that mud into a beautiful home. However, Oh Naradaji, this particular house was just like that mud completely devoid of any edible grains, as well as any furniture or ornamentation, and when she entered it she found only an empty structure. She therefore approached Me and said with great anger, "I have fasted repeatedly on so many auspicious occasions, making my body weak and thin. I have worshipped You and prayed to You in so many different ways for You are truly the master and protector of all the universes. Yet despite all this there is no food or wealth to be seen in my new home, Oh Janardana, please tell me. Why is this?"

"I replied, "Please return to your house. Sometime later the wives of the devas (demigods) will pay you a visit out of curiosity to see the new arrival, but do not open your door until they have described to you the glories and importance of Sat-tilaa Ekaadasii."

"Hearing this, she returned to her house. Eventually the devas' wives arrived there and in unison said, "Oh beautiful one, we have come to have your darshan. Oh auspicious one, please open the door to your house and let us see you.

"The lady replied, "Oh most dear ones, if you want me to open this door, you will have to describe to me the merit one obtains by observing the sacred fast of Sat-tilaa Ekaadasii." But to this request, not even one of the wives responded.

"Later, however, they returned to the house, and one of the wives nicely explained the sublime nature of this sacred Ekaadasii. And when the lady at last opened her door, they saw that she was neither a demigoddess, a Gandharvi, a she-demon, nor even a Naga-patni. She was simply an ordinary human lady.

"From then on the lady observed Sat-tilaa Ekaadasii, which awards ALL material enjoyment and liberation at the same time, as it has been described to her. And she finally received the beautiful furnishings and grains she had expected for her home. Moreover, her once ordinary material body was transformed into a beautiful spiritual form made of sac-cid-ananda (eternality, knowledge, and bliss), with a fine complexion. So, by the mercy and grace of Sat-tilaa Ekaadasii, both the lady and her new home in the spiritual world were at last radiantly splendid and lustrous with gold, silver, jewels, and diamonds.

"Oh Naradaji, a person should not ostentatiously observe Ekaadasii out of greed, with the hope of attaining wealth dishonestly. Selflessly, he should simply donate sesame seed, clothes, and food according to his capacity, for by doing so he will achieve good health and exalted spiritual consciousness, birth after birth. Ultimately, he will be given release from the bonds of this world (liberation) and admittance into the Lord's supreme abode will be his to enjoy. That is my opinion, Oh best of the demigods deva-rishis)!"

"Oh Daalbhya Muni," Pulastya Rishi concluded, "one who properly observes this wonderful Sat-tilaa Ekaadasii with great faith become free from all kinds of poverty - spiritual, mental, physical, social, and intellectual - as well as all kinds of ill luck and evil omens (sakuna). Indeed, following this Ekaadasii fast by donating, sacrificing, or eating sesame seeds frees one

of all past sin, without a doubt. One need not wonder how this happens. The rare soul who properly performs these acts of charity in the right devotional mood, following the Vedic injunctions, will become utterly free of all sinful reactions and go back to Godhead, back home to the spiritual world."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Magh-krishna Ekaadasii, or Sat-tilaa Ekaadasii, from the sacred Bhavishya-uttara Purana of Srila Krishna Dwaipayana Vyaasa.

4. **BHAIMI EKADASI:**

It is said that if one observes upavasa on this day then one receives entrance to Visnu's abode, even though one has not performed the other vratas of the year.

NOTE: The half day fast (vrata) for the appearance of Lord Varahaswamy is also observed on this Ekaadasii day, and the utsava (festival celebration - pujas and feasting, etc.) is observed on the Dvaadasii, which is when He appeared.

Yudhisthira Maharaja said, "Oh Lord of the lords, Sri Krishna, all glories unto You! Oh Master of the universe, You alone are the source of the four types of living entities

- those born from eggs,
- those born from perspiration,
- those born from seeds and
- those born from embryos.

You alone are the root cause of all, Oh Lord, and therefore You are the creator, maintainer and destroyer.

"My Lord, You have so kindly explained to me the auspicious day known as [Sat-tila EkAdasi](#), which occurs during the dark fortnight (krishna paksha) of the month of MAgha (January - February). Now please explain to me the EkAdasi that occurs in the light fortnight (shukla or Gaura paksha) of this month. By what name is it known, and what is the process for observing it? Who is the presiding Deity that is to be worshipped on this sublime day, which is so very dear to You?

Lord Sri Krishna replied, "Oh Yudhisthira, I shall gladly tell you about the EkAdasii that occurs during the light half of this month of MAgha. This EkAdasii obliterates all kinds of sinful reactions and demoniac influences that may be affecting the spirit soul. It is known as JayA Ekaadasii, and the fortunate soul who observes a fast on this sacred day is relieved of the great burden of ghostly existence. Thus there is no better Ekaadasii than this, for it truly bestows freedom from birth and death. It is to be honoured very carefully and diligently. So you to listen to Me very attentively, Oh Pandava, as I explain a wonderful historic episode regarding this Ekaadasii, an episode that I have already related in the Padma Purana.

"Long, long ago in the heavenly planets, Lord Indra ruled his celestial kingdom very nicely, and all the devas (demigods) living there were very happy and content. In Nandana Forest, which was beautifully graced with Parijata Flowers, Indra drank ambrosia whenever he liked and enjoyed the service of fifty million celestial maidens, the Apsaras, who danced in ecstasy for his pleasure.

"Many singers, led by Pushpadanta, sang in sweet voices beyond compare. Chitrasena, Indra's chief musician was there in the company of his wife MAlini and his handsome son MAlyavAn. An Apsara named Pushpavati became very much attracted to MAlyavAn; indeed [Cupid's sharp arrows](#) pierced the core of her heart. Her beautiful body and complexion, along with the enchanting movements of her eyebrows, captivated MAlayavAn.

"Oh King, listen as I describe the splendid beauty of Pushpavati: She has incomparably graceful arms with which to embrace a man like a fine silken noose; her face resembles the Moon; her lotus eyes reached almost to her lovely ears, which were adorned with wonderful and costly ear-rings; her thin, ornamented neck looked like a conch, having three lines; her waist was very slender, the size of a fist; her hips were broad, and her thighs like the trunks of banana trees; her naturally beautiful features were complemented by gorgeous ornaments and garments; her breasts were highly raised emphasizing her prime of youth; and to look upon her feet was to behold newly grown red lotuses.

"Seeing Pushpavati in all her heavenly beauty, MAlyavAn was bewitched at once. They had come with the other performers to please Lord Indra by singing and dancing enchantingly, but because they had become so enamored of each other, pierced through the heart by the arrows of Cupid,

lust personified, they were utterly unable to sing or dance properly before the lord and master of the heavenly realms.

Their pronunciation was wrong and their rhythm careless. Lord Indra understood the source of the errors at once. Offended at the discord in the musical performance, he became very angry and screamed, "You useless fools! You pretend to sing for me while in a stupor of infatuation with each other! You are mocking me! I curse you both to suffer henceforth as pisAchas (hobgoblins). As husband and wife, go to the earthly regions and reap the reactions of your offenses.'

"Struck dumb by these harsh words, MAlyavAn and Pushpavati at once became morose and fell from the beautiful Nandana Forest in the kingdom of heaven to a Himalayan peak here on planet Earth.

Immeasurably distressed, and their celestial intelligence vastly diminished by the effects of lord Indra's fierce curse, they lost their sense of taste and smell, and even their sense of touch. It was so cold and miserable high on the Himalayan wastes of snow and ice that they could not even enjoy the oblivion of sleep.

"Roaming aimlessly hither and thither in those harsh altitudes, MAlyavAn and Pushpavati suffered more and more, from one moment to the next. Even though they were situated in a cave, because of the snowfall and cold their teeth chattered ceaselessly, and their hair stood on end because of their fright and bewilderment.

"In this utterly desperate situation, MAlyavAn said to Pushpavati, 'What abominable sins did we commit to have to suffer in these pisAcha bodies, in this impossible environment? This is absolutely hellish! Though hell is very ferocious, the suffering we are undergoing here is even more abominable. Therefore it is abundantly clear that one should never commit sins'.

"And so the forlorn lovers trudged onward in the snow and ice. By their great good fortune, however, it so happened that very day was the all auspicious JayA (Bhaimi) Ekaadasii, the Ekaadasii of the light fortnight of the month of MAgha. Because of their misery they neglected to drink any water, kill any game, or even eat whatever fruits and leaves were available at that altitude, they unknowingly observed Ekaadasii by fasting completely from all food and drink. Sunk in misery MAlyavAn and Pushpavati

collapsed beneath a Pipal tree and did not even try to get up. The Sun had set
by that time.

"The night was even colder and more miserable than the day. They shivered in the frigid snowfall as their teeth chattered in unison, and when they became numb, they embraced just to keep warm. Locked in each other's arms, they could enjoy neither sleep nor sex. Thus they suffered through the whole night under the powerful curse of the deva Indra.

"Still, Oh Yudhisthira, by the mercy of the fast they had by chance (unknowingly) observed on JayA EkAdasii, and because they had remained awake all night, they were blessed.

Please hear what happened on the next day. As DwAdasii dawned, MAlyavAn and Pushpavati had given up their demoniac forms and were once again beautiful heavenly beings wearing lustrous ornaments and exquisite garments. As they both looked at each other in amazement, a celestial airplane (vimana) arrived on the spot for them. A chorus of heavenly denizens sang their praises as the reformed couple stepped into the beautiful aircraft and proceeded directly to the heavenly regions, buoyed up by the good wishes of everyone. Soon MAlyavAn and Pushpavati arrived at AmarAvati, Lord Indra's capital city, and then they immediately went before their lord (Indradev) and offered him their cheerful obeisances.

"Lord Indra was astonished to see that they had been transformed, restored to their original status and forms so soon after he had cursed them to suffer as demons far, far below his celestial kingdom. Indradev ask of them, 'What extraordinary meritorious deeds have you performed so that you could give up your pisAcha bodies so quickly after I cursed you? Who released you from my irresistible curse?'

"MAlyavAn replied, 'Oh lord, it was by the extreme mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna (VAsudeva) and also by the powerful influence of the JayA EkAdasii, that we were released from our suffering condition as pisAchas. This is the truth, Oh master: Because we executed devotional service to Lord Vishnu (even performed unknowingly – by ajnAta sukriti) by observing the day most dear to Him, we have happily been restored to our former status."

"Indradev then said, 'Because you served the Supreme Lord Sri Keshava by

observing EkAdasii, you have become worshipping even by me, and I can see that you are now completely purified of sin. Whosoever engages in devotional service to Lord Sri Hari or Lord Shiva becomes praiseworthy and worshipping even by me. Of this there is no doubt.' Lord Indradev then gave MAlyavAn and Pushpavati free rein to enjoy each other and wander about his heavenly planet as they wished.

"Therefore, Oh Maharaj Yudhisthira, one should strictly observe a fast on the sacred day of Lord Hari, especially on this JayA EkAdasii, which frees one from the sin of killing even a twice born brahmin. A great soul who observes this fast with full faith and devotion has in effect given all kinds of charity, performed all kinds of sacrifice, and bathed in all the Holy places of pilgrimage. Fasting on JayA EkAdasii qualifies one to reside in Vaikuntha and enjoy unending happiness for billions of yugas – indeed, forever as the soul is eternal. Oh great king, Lord Sri Krishna continued, one who even hears or reads these wonderful glories of JayA EkAdasii achieves the blessed merit attained by performing an Agnistoma fire sacrifice, during which the hymns from the Sama-veda are recited."

Note on Cupid: KAmadeva, lust personified, has five names according to the Amara-kosha dictionary: *kandarpa darpako* 'nanga kAmah pancha-sharaih smaraih "Cupid has five names; (1) Cupid; (2) *Darpaka*, 'he who prevents future events'; (3) *Ananga*, 'he who has no physical body'; (4) *KAmA*, 'lust personified'; and (5) *Pancha-sharaih*, 'he who holds five arrows' ".

Kandarpa: In the tenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita (BG 10:28.) Lord Sri Krishna says, *prajanash cAsmi kandarpah*; "Of causes for procreation, I am Kandarpa". The word Kandarpa also means "very beautiful". Kandarpa appeared as Lord Krishna's son Pradyumna in DwArakA.

Darpaka: This name indicates that Cupid can perceive what is to take place and prevent it from happening. Specifically, he tries to impede pure spiritual activity by alluring one's mind and forcibly engaging one in material sense enjoyment.

Ananga: Once, when Cupid disturbed the meditation of Lord Shiva, that powerful deva (demigod) burned him (Cupid) to ashes. Still, Shiva gave Cupid the benediction that he would act in the world even without a physical body - like a ghost.

KAmA: In Bhagavad Gita BG 7:11.) Lord Sri Krishna says, *dharmAviruddho bhuteshu kAmo'smi*: "I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles."

Pancha-sharaih: The five arrows with which Cupid pierces the mind of the living entities are taste, touch, sound, smell, and sight.

These are the five names of the empowered deva Cupid, who enchants all living entities and makes them do whatever he wants. Without receiving the mercy of Guru and Krishna one cannot resist his power.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of MAgha-shukla EkAdasii, or JayA EkAdasii, from the Bhavishya-uttara Purana.

5. **VIJAYA EKADASI**:

Yudhisthira Maharaja said, Oh Lord Sri Krishna, O glorious son of Vasudeva, please be merciful to me and describe the EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of PhAlguna (February-March).

Lord Sri Krishna replied, Oh Yudhisthira, Oh king of kings, gladly I shall tell you about this great fast, known as VijayA EkAdasii. Whoever observes it certainly achieves success in this life and the next. All the sins of one who fasts on this EkAdasii and hears its sublime glories are eradicated.

NARada Muni once asked lord Brahma, who sits on a lotus flower about the VijayA EkAdasii. Sri NARada said, Oh best of all the demigods, kindly tell me the merit one can achieve by faithfully observing VijayA EkAdasii.' NARada's great father then replied, My dear son, this oldest of fasting days is pure, and it nullifies all sins. I have never revealed this to anyone until today, but you can understand beyond any doubt that this EkAdasii bestows the result indicated by its name... (VijayA meaning Victory).

When Lord RAma was exiled to the forest for fourteen years, He, the goddess SitA, and His divine brother Lakshmana stayed at Panchavati as mendicants. Mother SitA was then kidnapped by the demon RAVana, and Lord RAma seemingly became bewildered like an ordinary man by distress. While searching for His beloved consort, the Lord came upon the dying JatAyu and thereafter killed His enemy Kabandha. The great devotee-vulture

JatAyu returned to Vaikuntha after telling RAma how His dear SitA had been abducted by RAVana.

Later, Lord RAma and [Sugriva](#), the king of the monkeys, became friends. Together they amassed a grand army of monkeys and bears and sent HanumAnji his minister to Sri LankA, where he was able to see JANaki (Srimati SitA devi) in an Ashoka grove garden. He delivered Lord RAma's message and showed the ring proving his authenticity for rendering such great service to the Supreme Lord Sri RAma. With the help of Sugriva, Lord RAma proceeded toward Sri LankA. Upon arriving at the shore of the ocean with the army of monkeys, He could understand that the water was uncommonly deep and hostile. Thus He said to Lakshmana, Oh son of SumitrA, how can We earn enough merit to be able to cross this vast ocean, the unfathomable abode of Varuna deva? I can see no easy way to cross it, teeming as it is with sharks and other ferocious aquatics.

Lakshmana replied, Oh best of all beings, Oh origin of all the devas, Oh primal personality, the great sage BakadAlbhya lives on an island just four miles from here. Oh RAGhava, he has seen many BrahmAs come and go, so aged and wise is he. Let us go to him, take his darshan (audience) and ask him how We can safely reach Our goal.

So RAma and Lakshmana proceeded to the humble Ashram of the incomparable BakadAlbhya Muni. Approaching him, the two Lords paid Their respectful obeisances to him as if he were a second Vishnu. BakadAlbhya could immediately understand, however, that Sri RAma was actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who for His own reasons had appeared on the Earth and was enacting just like a human being. "Sri RAma", said BakadAlbhya, "Oh best of the beings, why have You come to my lowly abode?" The Lord replied, "Oh great, twice born brahmin, I have come here to the ocean shore with My phalanx of monkey and bear warriors in order to cross the sea and conquer LankA and its demon horde headed by RAVana. Oh greatest of sages, please be merciful unto Me and please tell Me how I can cross this vast ocean. That is why I have come to your Ashram today." The sage said, "Oh Lord Sri RAma, I shall tell you of the most exalted of all fasts, observing which You will surely conquer RAVana and be eternally glorified. Kindly now listen with full attention."

"On the day before EkAdasii, fashion a water pot of gold or silver, or even copper. Even clay will do if these metals are unavailable. Fill the pot with

pure water and then decorate it nicely with mango leaves. Cover it and place it near a holy altar upon a mound of seven grains (the seven grains are barley, wheat, rice, corn, chickpeas, kukani, and dahl or peas). Now take Your morning bath, decorate the water pot with flower garlands and sandalwood paste, and in the concave lid atop the pot place there the barley, pomegranate, and coconut. Now with great love and devotion worship the water pot Deity form and offer Him incense, sandalwood paste, flowers, a ghee lamp, and a plate of sumptuous foods. Remain there awake that night beside this sacred pot. On top of the lid filled with barley, etc., place a golden mUrthy of Lord Sri NArAyana. When EkAdasii dawns, take Your morning bath and then decorate the water pot with fine sandalwood paste and garlands. Then worship the pot again with first class incense, lamps, sandalwood paste and flowers dipped in sandalwood paste, and then devoutly/devotedly place many kinds of cooked food, pomegranate, and coconut before the water pot. Then remain awake over night.

When the DwAdasi dawns, take the waterpot to the bank of a holy river, or even to the shore of a small pond. After worshipping it again properly, Oh King of kings, offer it with all the aforementioned ingredients to a pure hearted brahmin, expert in the Vedic sciences. If You and Your military commanders observe the VijayA EkAdasii in this way, You will surely be victorious in every way."

Lord Sri RAmachandra Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, did just as BakadAlbhya Muni instructed, and thus He conquered all demoniac forces. Similarly, anyone who observes the VijayA EkAdasii in this way will always be victorious in this mortal world, and after leaving this world he/she will reside forever in the anxiety free realm of the Kingdom of God known as the Vaikunthas.

Oh NArada, my son, from this history you can understand why one should observe this EkAdasii fast properly, strictly following the rules and regulations. This fast is powerful enough to eradicate all one's sinful reactions, even the most abominable ones.

Lord Sri Krishna concluded, Oh Yudhisthira, anyone who reads or hears this history will attain the same great merit as that which is earned by performing a horse sacrifice on days of yore.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of PhAlguna-krishna EkAdasii or VijayA EkAdasii, from the Skanda PurAna.

6. 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 EkAdasii obtains enormous wealth, gets free of the effects of all kinds of sins, and attains liberation. Fasting on this EkAdasii is more purifying than donating one thousand cows in charity to a pure brAhmana. So please hear me attentively as I tell you the story of a hunter who, though daily engaged in killing innocent animals for his living, achieved liberation by observing a fast on Amalakii EkAdasii following the prescribed rules and regulations of worship.

"There was once a kingdom named VaidishA, 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 King PAshabinduka, a member of the dynasty of Soma, the moon. He was also known as Chitraratha and was very religious and truthful. It is said that King Chitraratha had the strength of ten thousand elephants and that he was very wealthy and knew the six branches of Vedic wisdom perfectly.

"During the reign of Maharaja Chitraratha, not a single person in his kingdom attempted to practice another's dharma (duty) so perfectly engaged in their own dharmas were all the brAhmanas, kshatriyas, vaisyas, and sudras. Neither miser nor pauper was to be seen throughout the land, not was there ever a drought or flood. Indeed, the kingdom was free of disease, and everyone enjoyed good health. The people rendered loving devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Vishnu, as did the king, who also rendered special service to Lord Shiva. Moreover, twice a month everyone fasted on EkAdasii.

"In this way, O best of kings, the citizens of VaidishA lived many long years

in great happiness and prosperity. Giving up all varieties of materialistic religion, they completely dedicated themselves to the loving service of the Supreme Lord, Hari.

"Once, in the month of Phalguna (February - March), the holy fast of Amalakii EkAdasii arrived, conjoined with DvAdasi. King Chitraratha realised that this particular fast would bestow especially great benefit, and thus he and all the citizens of VaidishA observed this sacred EkAdasii very strictly, carefully following all the rules and regulations.

"After bathing in the river, the king and all his subjects went to the temple of Lord Vishnu, where an Amalakii tree grew. First the king and his leading sages offered the tree a pot filled with water, as well as a fine canopy, shoes, gold, diamonds, rubies, pearls, sapphires, and aromatic incense. Then they worshiped Lord ParashurAma with these prayers: 'Oh Lord ParashurAma, Oh son of RenukA, Oh all-pleasing one, Oh liberator of the worlds, kindly come beneath this holy Amalakii tree and accept our humble obeisances.'

Then they prayed to the Amalakii tree: 'Oh Amalakii, 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 worshiping according to the [regulations governing a sacred EkAdasii 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 VaidishA observing Amalakii EkAdasii by performing an all-night vigil, fasting, and worshiping Lord Vishnu in the beautiful forest setting, which was brilliantly illuminated by many lamps. The hunter hid nearby, wondering what this extraordinary sight before him was.

'What is going on here?' he thought. What he saw in that lovely forest beneath the holy Amalakii tree was the Deity of Lord DAModara being worshiped upon the Asana of a waterpot, and what he heard were devotees singing sacred songs describing Lord Krishna's transcendental forms and

pastimes. Despite himself, that staunchly irreligious killer of innocent birds and animals spent the entire night in great amazement as he watched the EkAdasii 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 EkAdasii](#) and returned to the city of VaidishA. 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 Ekadasii and hearing the glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, 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. Always active in the affairs of state, he enjoyed taking excellent care of his subjects, as though they were his own children. He disliked pride in anyone and would smash it when he saw it. 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 uncivilised, 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 Personality of Godhead, 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 Personality of Godhead Sri Keshava (Krishna). He returned to his capital city and ruled there like a second lord Indra (king of the heavenly regions), without any obstacles at all.

"Therefore, Oh King Mandhata," the venerable Vasishtha Muni concluded, "...anyone who observes this holy Amalakii EkAdasii 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.

7. **PAPAMOCHANI EKADASI:**

Sri Yudhisthira MAharAja said, "Oh Supreme Lord, I have heard from You the explanation of [Amalakii EkAdasii](#) which occurs during the light fortnight of the month of PhAlguna (February-March), and now I wish to hear about the EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra (March-April). What is its name, Oh Lord, and what results can one attain by observing it?"

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna, replied, "O best of

kings, for the benefit of everyone I shall gladly describe to you the glories of this EkAdasii, which is known as PApamochanii. The history of this EkAdasii was once narrated to the Emperor MAndhAta by Lomasa Rishi. King MAndhAta addressed the Rishi, 'Oh great sage, for the benefit of all people, please tell me the name of the EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra, and please explain the process for observing it. Also, please describe the benefits one gains by observing this EkAdasii.'

"Lomasa Rishi replied, "The EkAdasii that occurs during the dark part of the month of Chaitra is named PApamochanii EkAdasii. For the faithful devotee it removes the influences of ghosts and demons. Oh lion among men, this EkAdasii also awards the eight perfections of life, fulfils all kinds of desires, purifies one's life of all sinful reactions, and makes a person perfectly virtuous.

"Now please listen to a historical account concerning this EkAdasii and Chitraratha, the chief of the Gandharvas (heavenly musicians). During the spring season, in the company of heavenly dancing girls, Chitraratha once came upon a beautiful forest bursting forth with a great variety of flowers. There he and the girls joined the Gandharvas and many Kinnaras, along with Lord Indra himself, the king of heaven, who was enjoying a visit there. Everyone felt that there was no better garden than this forest. Many sages were also present, performing their austerities and penances. The demigods particularly enjoyed visiting this celestial garden during the months of Chaitra and Vaisakha (April-May).

"A great sage named MedhAvi resided in that forest, and the very attractive dancing girls would always attempt to seduce him. One famous girl in particular, MaNjughoshA, contrived many ways to allure the exalted Muni, but out of great respect for the sage and feat of his power, which he had attained after years and years of ascetics, she would not come very close to him. At a spot two miles from the sage, she pitched a tent and began singing very sweetly as she played a tamboura. Cupid himself became excited when he saw and heard her perform so nicely and smelled the fragrance of her sandal-paste unguent. He remembered his own unfortunate experience with Lord Shiva and decided to take revenge by seducing MedhAvi. ([see footnote 1](#))

"Using the eyebrows of MaNjughoshA as a bow, her glances as a

bowstring, her eyes as arrows, and her breasts as a target, Cupid approached MedhAvi in order to tempt him to break his trance and his vows. In other words, Cupid engaged MaNjughoshA as his assistant, and when she looked at that powerful and attractive young sage, she also became agitated by lust. Seeing that he was highly intelligent and learned, wearing a clean white brahmana's thread draped across his shoulder, holding a sannyasi's staff, and sitting handsomely in the asrama of Chyavana Rishi, MaNjughoshA came before him.

"She began to sing seductively, and the small bells of her belt and around her ankles, together with the bangles on her wrists, produced a delightful musical symphony. The sage MedhAvi was enchanted. he understood that this beautiful young woman desired union with him, and at that instant Cupid increased his attraction for MaNjughoshA by releasing his powerful weapons of taste, touch, sight, smell, and sound. "Slowly MaNjughoshA approached MedhAvi, her bodily movements and sweet glances attracting him. She gracefully put her tamboura down and embraced the sage with her two arms, just as a creeper winds itself around a strong tree. Captivated, MedhAvi gave up his meditation and decided to sport with her - and instantly his purity of heart and mind abandoned him. Forgetting even the difference between night and day, he went away with her to sport for a long, long time. ([see footnote 2](#))

"Seeing that the young yogi's sanctity had become seriously eroded, MaNjughoshA decided to abandon him and return home. She said. "O great one, please permit me to return home." "MedhAvi replied, "But you have only just arrived, O beautiful one. Please stay with me at least until tomorrow." "Fearful of the sage's yogic power, MaNjughoshA stayed with MedhAvi for precisely fifty-seven years, nine months, and three days, but to MedhAvi all this time seemed like a moment. Again she asked him, "Please permit me to leave." "MedhAvi replied, "O dear one, listen to me. Stay with me for one more night, and then you may leave tomorrow morning. Just stay with me until I have performed my morning duties and chanted the sacred GAyatri mantra. Please wait until then."

"MaNjughoshA was still fearful of the sage's great yogic power, but she forced a smile and said, "How long will it take you to finish your morning hymns and rituals? Please be merciful and think of all the time you have already spent with me."

"The sage reflected on the years he had been with MaNjughoshA and then said with great astonishment. "Why, I have spent more than fifty-seven years with you!" His eyes turned red and began to emanate sparks. He now regarded MaNjughoshA as death personified and the destroyer of his spiritual life. "You rascal woman! You have turned all the hard-earned results of my austerities to ashes!" Trembling with anger, he cursed MaNjughoshA, "Oh sinful one, Oh hard-hearted, degraded one! You know only sin! May all terrible fortune be yours! Oh rascal woman, I curse you to become an evil hobgoblin - pishAcha!"

"Cursed by the sage MedhAvi, the beautiful MaNjughoshA humbly beseeched him, "Oh best of the brAhmanas, please be merciful to me and revoke your curse! Oh great one, it is said that association with pure devotees gives immediate results but their curses take effect only after seven days. I have been with you for fifty-seven years, Oh master, so please be kind to me!"

"MedhAvi Muni replied, "Oh gentle lady what can I possibly do? You have destroyed all my austerities. But even though you have done this sinful deed, I shall tell you a way you can be released from my wrath. In the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra there is an all-auspicious EkAdasii that removes all one's sins. Its name is PApamochanii, Oh beautiful one, and whoever fasts on this sacred day becomes completely freed from having to take birth in any kind of devilish form."

"With these words, the sage left at once for his father's Ashram. Seeing him enter the hermitage, Chyavana Muni said, "Oh son, by acting unlawfully you have squandered the wealth of your penances and austerities." "Medhavi replied, "Oh Father, kindly reveal what atonement I must perform to remove the obnoxious sin I have incurred by privately associating with the dancing girl MaNjughoshA." "Chyavana Muni answered, "Dear son, you must fast on PApamochanii EkAdasii, which occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra. It eradicates all sins, no matter how grievous they may be." "MedhAvi followed his father's advice and fasted on PApamochanii EkAdasii. Thus all his sins were destroyed and he again became filled with excellent merit. Similarly, MaNjughoshA observed the same fast and became free of the hobgoblin curse. Ascending once again to the heavenly spheres, she too returned to her former position." "Lomasha Rishi continued, "Thus, Oh king, the great benefit of fasting on PApamochanii EkAdasii is that whoever does so with faith and devotion will have all his sins

completely

destroyed.'

Sri Krishna concluded, "Oh King Yudhishtira, whoever reads or hears about PAmochanii EkAdasii obtains the very same merit he would get if he donated a thousand cows in charity, and he also nullifies the sinful reactions he may have incurred by killing a brAhmana, killing an embryo through abortion, drinking liquor, or having sex with his guru's wife. Such is the incalculable benefit of properly observing this holy day of PAmochanii EkAdasii, which is so dear to Me and so meritorious."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Chaitra-Krishna EkAdasii, or PAmochanii EkAdasii, from the Bhavishya-uttara PurAna.

8. **KAMADA EKADASI:**

Sri SUta GoswAmi said, "Oh sages, let me offer my humble and respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Hari, Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the son of Devaki and Vasudeva, by whose mercy I can describe the fast day that removes all kinds of sins. It was to the devoted Yudhistira that Lord Krishna glorified the twenty-four primary EkAdasiis, which destroy sin, and now I shall recount one of those narrations to you. Great-learned sages have selected these twenty-four narrations from the eighteen PurANas, for they are truly sublime.

Yudhishtira MahArAja said, 'Oh Lord Krishna, Oh VAsudeva, please accept my humble obeisances. Please describe to me the EkAdasii that occurs during the light part of the month of Chaitra [March-April]. What is its name, and what are its glories?'

Lord Sri Krishna replied, 'Oh Yudhishtira, please listen to Me attentively as I relate the ancient history of this sacred EkAdasii, a history Vasishtha Muni once related to King Dilipa, the great-grandfather of Lord RAMachandra.

King Dilipa asked the great sage Vasishtha, "Oh wise brAhmana, I wish to hear about the EkAdasii that comes during the light part of the month of Chaitra. Please describe it to me."

Vasishtha Muni replied, "Oh king, your inquiry is glories. Gladly shall I tell you what you wish to know. The EkAdasii that occurs during the light fortnight of Chaitra is named KAmadA EkAdasii. It consumes all sins, as a

forest fire consumes a supply of dry firewood. It is very purifying, and it bestows the highest merit upon one who faithfully observes it. Oh king, now hear an ancient history which is so meritorious that it removes all one's sins simply by being heard.

Once, long ago, there existed a city-state named Ratnapura, which was decorated with gold and jewels and in which sharp-fanged snakes would enjoy intoxication. King Pundarika was the ruler of this most beautiful kingdom, which numbered many Gandharvas, Kinnaras, and Apsaras among its citizens.

Among the Gandharvas were Lalita and his wife LalitA, who was an especially lovely dancer. These two were intensely attracted to each other, and their home was full of great wealth and fine food. LalitA loved her husband dearly, and likewise he constantly thought of her within his heart.

Once, at the court of King Pundarika, many Gandharvas were dancing and Lalita was singing alone, without his wife. He could not help thinking about her as he sang, and because of this distraction he lost track of the song's meter and melody. Indeed, Lalita sang the ending of his song improperly, and one of the envious snakes who was in attendance at the king's court complained to the king that Lalita was absorbed in thinking of his wife instead of his sovereign. the king became furious upon hearing this, and his eyes turned crimson with rage. Suddenly he shouted, 'Oh foolish knave, because you were lustfully thinking of a woman instead of reverently thinking of your king as you performed your court duties, I curse you to at once become a cannibal!

Oh king, Lalita immediately became a fearful cannibal, a great man-eating demon whose appearance terrified everyone. His arms were eight miles long, his mouth was as big as a huge cave, his eyes were as awesome as the sun and moon, his nostrils resembled enormous pits in the earth, his neck was a veritable mountain, his hips were four miles wide, and his gigantic body stood a full sixty-four miles high. Thus poor Lalita, the loving Gandharva singer, had to suffer the reaction of his offense against King Pundarika.

Seeing her husband suffering as a horrible cannibal, LalitA became overwhelmed with grief. She thought, 'Now that my dear husband is suffering the effects of the kings' curse, what is to be my lot? What should I

do? Where should I go?' In this way LalitA grieved day and night. Instead of enjoying life as a Gandharvas wife, she had to wander everywhere in the thick jungle with her monstrous husband, who had fallen completely under the spell of the king's curse and was wholly engaged in terrible sinful activities. He wandered fitfully across forbidding region, a once-beautiful Gandharva now reduced to the ghastly behaviour of a man-eater. Utterly distraught to see her dear husband suffer so much in his dreadful condition, LalitA began to cry as she followed his mad journeying.

By good fortune, however, LalitA came upon the sage Shringi one day. He was sitting on the peak of the famous VindhyAchala Hill. Approaching him, she immediately offered the ascetic her respectful obeisances. The sage noticed her bowing down before him and said, 'Oh most beautiful one, who are you? Whose daughter are you, and why have you come here? Please tell me everything in truth.'

LalitA replied, 'Oh great sage, I am the daughter of the great Gandharva ViradhanVA, and my name is LalitA. I roam the forests and plains with my dear husband, whom King Pundarika has cursed to become a man-eating demon. Oh brAhmana, I am greatly aggrieved to see his ferocious form and terribly sinful activities. Oh master, please tell me how I can perform some act of atonement on behalf of my husband. What pious act can I perform to free him from this demonic form, Oh best of brAhmanas?'

'The sage replied, 'Oh heavenly maiden, there is an EkAdasii named KAmadA that occurs in the light fortnight of the month of Chaitra. It is coming up soon. Whoever fasts on this day has all his desires fulfilled. If you observe this EkAdasii fast according to its rules and regulations and give the merit you thus earn to your husband, he will be freed from the curse at once.' LalitA was overjoyed to hear these words from the sage.

Lalita faithfully observed the fast of KAmadA EkAdasii according to the instructions of the sage Shringi, and on DvAdasi she appeared before him and the Deity of Lord VAsudeva and said, 'I have faithfully observed the fast of KAmadA EkAdasii. By the merit earned through my observance of this fast, let my husband be free from the curse that has turned him into a demoniac cannibal. May the merit I have gained thus free him from misery.'

As soon as LalitA finished speaking, her husband, who stood nearby, was at once freed from the king's curse. He immediately regained his original form

as the Gandharva Lalita, a handsome heavenly singer adorned with many beautiful ornaments. Now, with his wife LalitA, he could enjoy even more opulence than before. All this was accomplished by the power and glory of KAmadA EkAdasii. At last the Gandharva couple boarded a celestial airplane and ascended to heaven.

Lord Sri Krishna continued, 'Oh Yudhishtira, best of kings, anyone who hears this wonderful narration should certainly observe holy KAmadA EkAdasii to the best of his ability, such great merit does it bestow upon the faithful devotee. I have therefore described its glories to you for the benefit of all humanity.

There is no better EkAdasii than KAmadA EkAdasii. It can eradicate even the sin of killing a brAhmana, and it also nullifies demoniac curses and cleanses the consciousness. In all the three worlds, among movable and immovable living entities, there is no better day'.

9. VARUTHINI EKADASI:

Sri Yudhishtira Maharaj said, "Oh Vasudeva, I offer my most humble obeisances unto You. Please now describe to me the EkAdasii of the dark fortnight (krishna paksha) of the month of VaisAkha (April-May), including its specific merits and influence."

Lord Sri Krishna replied, "Oh King, in this world and the next, the most auspicious and magnanimous EkAdasii is VarUthinii EkAdasii, which occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of VaisAkha.

Whosoever observes a complete fast on this sacred day has his sins completely removed, obtains continuous happiness, and achieves all good fortune.

Fasting on VarUthinii EkAdasii makes even an unfortunate woman fortunate. Upon anyone who observes it, this EkAdasii bestows material enjoyment in this life and liberation after the death of this present body. It destroys the sins of all and saves people from the miseries of repeated rebirth.

"By observing this EkAdasii properly, King MAndhAtA was liberated. Many other kings also benefited from observing it – kings such as

MahArAja DhundhumAra, in the IkshvAku dynasty, who became free from leprosy resulting from the curse that Lord Shiva had imposed upon him as a punishment.

Whatever merit one obtains by performing austerities and penances for ten thousand years is achieved by a person who observes VarUthinii EkAdasii.

The merit one achieves by donating a great amount of gold during a solar eclipse at Kurukshetra is gained by one who observes this one EkAdasii with love and devotion, and certainly attains his goals in this life and the next. In short, this EkAdasii is pure and very enlivening and the destroyer of all sins.

"Better than giving horses in charity is giving elephants, and better than giving elephants is giving land. But better still than giving land is the giving of sesame seeds, and better than that is giving of gold. Still better than giving gold is giving food grains - for all the forefathers, demigods (*devas*), and human beings become satisfied by eating grains. Thus there is no better gift of charity than this in the past, present or future."

NOTE: "Yet learned scholars have declared that giving away a young maiden in marriage to a worthy person is equal to giving away food grains in charity. Moreover, Lord Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, has said that giving cows in charity is equal to giving food grains. Still better than all these charities is teaching spiritual knowledge to the ignorant. Yet all the merits one can attain by performing all these acts of charity are attained by one who fasts on the VarUthinii EkAdasii."

"One who lives off the wealth of his daughters suffers a hellish condition until the inundation of the entire universe, Oh BhArata. Therefore one should be especially careful not to use the wealth of his daughter. Oh best of kings, any householder who takes his daughter's wealth out of greed, who tries to sell his daughter, or who takes money from the man to whom he has given his daughter in marriage – such a householder becomes a lowly cat in his next life. Therefore it is said that whoever, as a sacred act of charity, gives away in marriage a maiden decorated with various ornaments, and who also gives a dowry with her, obtains merit that cannot be described even by Chitrugupta, the chief secretary of YamarAja in the heavenly planets. That very same merit, however, can be easily achieved by one who fasts on the
VarUthinii
EkAdasii.

"The following things should be given up on the Dashami, (the tenth phase of the Moon), the day before the EkAdasii: eating on bell-metal plates, eating any kind of urad-dahl, eating red-lentils, eating chick-peas, eating kondo (a grain that is primarily eaten by poor people and that resembles poppy seeds or agarpanthas seeds), eating spinach, eating honey, eating in another person's house/home, eating more than once, and participating in sex of any kind.

"On the EkAdasii itself one should give up the following: gambling, sports, sleeping during the daytime, betal nuts and its leaf, brushing one's teeth, spreading rumours, faultfinding, talking to the spiritually fallen, anger, and lying.

"On the DwAdasii the day after EkAdasii (the twelfth phase of the Moon), one should give up the following: eating on bell-metal plates, eating urad-dahl, red-lentils, or honey, lying, strenuous exercise or labour, eating more than once, any sexual activity, shaving the body, face or head, smearing oils on one's body, and eating in another's home."

Lord Sri Krishna continued, "Whoever observes the VarUthinii EkAdasii in this way becomes free from all sinful reactions and returns to the eternal, spiritual abode. One who worships Lord JanArdana (Krishna) on this EkAdasii by staying awake throughout the entire night, also becomes free from all his previous sins and attains to the spiritual abode. Therefore, Oh king, he who is frightened of his accumulated sins and their attendant reactions, and thus of death itself, must observe VarUthinii EkAdasii by fasting very strictly.

"Finally, Oh noble Yudhisthira, he who hears or reads this glorification of the sacred VarUthinii EkAdasii obtains the merit earned by donating one thousand cows in charity, and at last he returns home, to the Supreme abode of Lord Vishnu in the Vaikunthas".

10. MOHINI EKADASI:

Sri Yudhisthira Maharaja said, "Oh JanArdana, what is the name of the EkAdasii that occurs during the light fortnight (sukla paksha) of the month of VaisAkha (April-May) ? What is the process for observing it properly? Kindly narrate all of these details to me.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna replied, "Oh blessed son of Dharma, what Vasishtha Muni once told to Lord Ramachandra I shall now describe to you. Please hear Me attentively.

"Lord Ramachandra asked Vasishtha Muni, 'Oh great sage, I would like to hear about the best of all fasting days that day which destroys all kinds of sins and sorrows. I have suffered long enough in separation from My dear SitA, and so I wish to hear from you about how My suffering can be ended.'

"The sage Vasishtha replied, 'Oh Lord RAmA, Oh You whose intelligence is so keen, simply by remembering Your name one can cross the ocean of the material world. You have questioned me in order to benefit all of humanity and fulfill everyone's desires. I shall now describe that day of fasting which purifies the whole world.

'Oh Rama, that day is known as VaisAkha-sukla EkAdasii, which falls on DvAdasii. It removes all sins and is famous as Mohinii EkAdasii. Truly, Oh dear Rama, the merit of this EkAdasii frees the fortunate soul who observes it from the network of illusion. Therefore, if You want to relieve Your suffering(s), observe this auspicious EkAdasii perfectly, for it removes all obstacles from ones path and relieves the greatest miseries. Kindly listen as I describe its glories, because for one who even just hears about this auspicious EkAdasii, the greatest sins are nullified.

'On the banks of the Sarasvati River there was once a beautiful city named BhadrAvati, which was ruled by King DyutimAn. Oh RAmA, that steadfast, truthful, and highly intelligent king was born in the dynasty of the Moon (Chandra-vamsa). In his kingdom was a merchant named DhanapAla, who possessed a great deal of wealth of food grains and money. He was also very pious. DhanapAla arranged for lakes to be dug, sacrificial arenas to be erected, and beautiful gardens to be cultivated for the benefit of all the citizens of BhadrAvati. He was an excellent devotee of Lord Vishnu and had five sons: SumAna, DyutimAn, MedhAvii, Sukriti, and Dhrishthabuddhi.

'Unfortunately, his son Dhrishthabuddhi always engaged in greatly sinful activities, such as sleeping with prostitutes and associating with similar degraded persons. He enjoyed illicit sex, gambling, and many other varieties of acts aimed at gratifying the senses. He disrespected the demigods (devas), the brahmins, the forefathers and other elders of the community, as well as his family's guests. The evil-hearted Dhrishthabuddhi spent up his father's

wealth indiscriminately, always feasting on untouchable foods and drinking alcohol to excess.

'One day DhanapAla kicked Dhrishthabuddhi out of the house after he saw him walking along the road arm-in-arm with a known prostitute. From then on all Dhrishthabuddhi's relatives were highly critical of him and distanced themselves from him also. After he had sold all of his inherited ornaments and become destitute, the prostitute also abandoned him and insulted him because of his poverty.

'Dhrishthabuddhi was now full of anxiety, and also hungry. He thought, "What should I do ? Where should I go ? How can I maintain myself ? He then began to steal. The king's constables arrested him, but when they learned who it was, and that his father was the famous DhanapAla, they released him. He was caught and released in this way many times. But at last, sick of his arrogance and total disrespect for others, and their property, the ill-mannered Dhrishthabuddhi was apprehended, handcuffed, and then beaten. After whipping him, the king's marshals warned him, "Oh evil minded one, there is no place for you in this kingdom.

'However, Dhrishthabuddhi was freed from his tribulation by his father and immediately thereafter entered the dense forest. He wandered here and there, hungry and thirsty and suffering greatly. Eventually he began killing the jungle animals, the lions, deer, boars, and even wolves for food. Always ready in his hand was his bow, always on his shoulder was his quiver full of arrows. He also killed many birds, such as chakoras, peacocks, kankas, doves and pigeons. He unhesitatingly slaughtered many species of birds and animals to maintain his sinful way of life, the sinful results accumulating more and more each day. On account of his previous sins, he was now immersed in an ocean of great sin that was so relentless that it appeared that he could not get out.

'Dhrishthabuddhi was always miserable and anxious, but one day, during the month of VaisAkha, by the force of some of his past merit he chanced upon the sacred Ashrama of KauNDinya Muni. The great sage had just finished bathing in the Ganges River, and water was dripping from him still. Dhrishthabuddhi had the great good fortune to touch some of those droplets of water that were falling from the great sage's wet clothing. Instantly Dhrishthabuddhi was freed of his ignorance, and his sinful reactions were reduced. Offering his humble obeisances to KauNDinya Muni,

Dhrishthabuddhi prayed to him with joined palms; "Oh great brAhmana, please describe to me some of the atonement I may perform without too much endeavour. I have committed so many sins in my life, and these have now made me very poor.

'The great rishi replied, "Oh son, listen with great attention, for by hearing me your life will change, and you will become free of all your remaining sins. In the light fortnight of this very month, VaisAkha (April-May) there occurs the sacred Mohinii EkAdasii, which has the power to nullify sins as vast and weighty as Mount Sumeru. If you follow my advice and faithfully observe a fast on this EkAdasii, which is so dear to Lord Hari, you will be freed from all the sinful reactions of many, many births.

'Hearing these words with great joy, Dhrishthabuddhi promised to observe a fast on Mohinii EkAdasii according to the sage's instructions and direction. Oh best of kings, Oh RAMachandra Bhagavan, by fasting completely on Mohinii EkAdasii, the once sinful Dhrishthabuddhi, the prodigal son of the merchant DhanapAla, became sinless. Afterwards he achieved a beautiful transcendental form and, free at last of all obstacles, rode upon the carrier of Lord Vishnu, Garuda, to the Supreme abode of the Lord.

'Oh RAMachandra, the fast day of Mohinii EkAdasii removes the darkest illusory attachments to material existence. There is thus no better fast day in all the three worlds than this.'

Lord Sri Krishna concluded, "and so, Oh Yudhishtira, there is no place of pilgrimage, no sacrifice, and no charity that can bestow merit equal to even one sixteenth of the merit a faithful devotee of Mine obtains by observing the Mohinii EkAdasii. And He who hears and studies the glories of Mohinii EkAdasii achieves the merit of giving away one thousand cows in charity.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of VaisAkha-sukla EkAdasii, or Mohinii EkAdasii, from the Kurma PurANa.

11. **APARA EKADASI:**

Sri Yudhishtira MahArAj said, "Oh JanArdana, what is the name of the EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight (*krishna paksha*) of the month of *Jyeshtha* (May-June)? I wish to hear from You the glories of this sacred day of Hari. Please narrate everything to me"

Lord Sri Krishna said, "Oh king, your inquiry is wonderful because the answer will benefit the whole human society. This EkAdasii is so sublime and meritorious that even the greatest sins can be erased by its purity.

"Oh great saintly king, the name of this unlimitedly meritorious EkAdasii is AparA EkAdasii. Whoever fasts on this holy day becomes famous all over the universe. Even such sins as killing a brAhmana, a cow, or an embryo; blasphemy; or having sex with another man's wife are completely eradicated by observing AparA EkAdasii.

"Oh king people who bear false witness are most sinful. A person who falsely or sarcastically glorifies another; one who cheats while weighing something on a scale; one who fails to execute the duties of his *varna* or Ashrama (an unqualified man's posing as a brahmin, for example, or a person's reciting the Vedas wrongly); one who invents his own scriptures; one who cheats others; one who is a charlatan astrologer, a cheating accountant, or a false Ayurvedic doctor. All these are surely as bad as persons who bears false witness, and they are all destined for hellish punishments. But simply by observing AparA EkAdasii, all such sinners become completely free of their sinful reactions.

"Warriors who fall from their *kshatriya-dharma* and flee the battlefield go to a ferocious hell. But, Oh Yudhishtira, even such a fallen kshatriya, if he observes fasting on the AparA EkAdasii, is freed of that great sinful reaction and goes to heaven.

"That disciple is the greatest sinner who, after receiving a proper spiritual education from his spiritual master, turns around and blasphemes him. Such a so-called disciple suffers unlimitedly. But even he, rascal though he be, if he simply observes AparA EkAdasii, can attain to the spiritual world. Listen, Oh king, as I describe to you further glories of this amazing EkAdasii.

"The merit attained by one who performs all of the following acts of piety is equal to the merit achieved by one who observes AparA EkAdasii: bathing three times daily in Pushkara-kshetra during Kartika (October-November); bathing at Prayag in the month of Magh (January-February) when the sun is in the zodiac of Capricorn; rendering service to Lord Shiva at VarANasi (Benares) during Shiva-ratri; offering oblations to one's forefathers at GayA; bathing in the sacred Gautami River when Jupiter transits Leo (Simha); having *darshan* of Lord Shiva at KedArnAtha; seeing Lord BadrinAth when

the Sun transits the sign of Aquarius (Kumbha); and bathing at the time of a solar eclipse at Kurukshetra and giving cows, elephants, and gold there in charity. All the merit one gets from performing these pious acts is gained by a person who observes the AparA EkAdasii fast. Also, the merit attained by one who donates a pregnant cow, along with gold and fertile land, is attained by one who fasts on this day.

"In other words, AparA EkAdasii is an axe that cuts down the fully matured forest full of trees of sinful deeds, it is a forest fire that burns sins as if they were kindling firewood, it is the sun blazing before one's dark misdeeds, and it is a lion stalking the meek deer of impiety.

"Therefore, Oh Yudhishtira, whoever truly fears his past and present sins must observe AparA EkAdasii very strictly. One who does not observe this fast must be born again in the material world, like one bubble among millions in a huge body of water, or like a small ant among all other species.

"Therefore one must faithfully observe the sacred AparA EkAdasii and worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Trivikrama. One who does so is freed of all his sins and promoted to the abode of Lord Vishnu.

"Oh BhArata, for the benefit of all humanity I have thus described to you this the importance of the holy AparA EkAdasii.

"Anyone who hears or reads this description is certainly freed from all kinds of sins, oh best of saintly kings, Yudhishtira".

12. **PANDAVA EKADASI:**

During the hottest season (northern hemisphere), if one can perform upavasa without water one is performing a great feat. One may take only caranamrta and acamana water. Bhima requested one vrata day by which he could obtain the fruits of all the other days of vrata that he was incapable of observing. Vyasadeva advised him to follow this difficult vrata.

One should worship the Lord in the evening by bathing him in milk. On the dvadasi one should give full pots of water to brahmanas and feed them before breaking one's fast.

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.

ATMADROHAH KRTASTES TU YAIR ESA NA HY UPOSITA
PAPATMANO DURACARA DUSTAS TE NA ATRA SAMSAYAH

(HARI BHAKTI VILASA 15/33 from PADMA PURANA Vyasadeva
speaks to Bhimasena)

Anyone who does not fast on this particular EkAdasii (nirjala EkAdasii),
they should be understood to be sinful, corrupted and suicidal person
without a doubt.

The Story of PANDava Nirjala EkAdasii: PANDava Nirjala EkAdasii - Jyeshtha-shukla EkAdasii - from Brahma-vaivarta PurANa.

Once Bhimasena, the younger brother of Maharaja Yudhisthira, asked the
great sage Shrila VyAsadeva, 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 EkAdasii 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 EkAdasii 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, (the digestive air) hunger is unbearable to me. I can give
widely in charity and worship Lord Keshava properly with all manner of

wonderful upacharas (items), but I cannot be asked to fast on EkAdasii. Please tell me how I can obtain the same merits result without fasting."

Hearing these words, the grandsire of Bhima, Srila VyAsadeva said, "If you want to go to the heavenly planets and avoid the hellish planets, you should indeed observe a fast on both the light and dark EkAdasiis."

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 Nairritti, the south-eastern direction. He is one of the eight material elements, and Parikshit MahArAja, he is very expert at examining things. He examined MahArAja Shibi once by turning into a dove (for further information on this incident see Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's Srimad Bhagavatam commentary to 1:12:20. Purport.)

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 EkAdasii that is worthy of my fasting and that includes all other EkAdasiis. I shall faithfully observe that fast and hopefully still become eligible for liberation's release."

Shrila VyAsadeva 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 EkAdasiis." As stated in Srimad Bhagavatam

(Mahabhagavat PurANam) 12:13:12 and 15.) the Bhagavat PurANam 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 EkAdasii strictly is a great aid in that process, and here Shrila VyAsadeva is simply stressing to Bhima the importance of the EkAdasii vratam. "IOne who fasts on EkAdasiis saved from going to the hellish planets."

Hearing Shrila VyAsadeva'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!"

VyAsadeva replied, "Without drinking even water, you should fast on the EkAdasii 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 Achamana for pratiprokshana purification. But while performing Achamana 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 EkAdasii day to sunrise on the DwAdashii day. If a person endeavours to observe this great fast very strictly, he easily achieves the result of observing all twenty-four other EkAdasii fasts throughout the entire year.

"On DwAdashii 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 EkAdasii in this manner reaps the benefit of having fasted on every EkAdasii 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 EkAdasii. 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 EkAdasii, 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 EkAdasii truly reaps the benefit of all other EkAdasii fasts.

"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 minimised, 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 EkAdasii and become free of all one's past sins.

"Oh son of Vayu, what more can I say to you? You should not eat during the EkAdasiis that occur during the dark and light fortnights, and you should even give up drinking water (nir = no jalaa= water) on the particularly auspicious EkAdasii day of Jyeshtha-shukla EkAdasii. Oh Vrikodara (voracious eater), whoever fasts on this EkAdasii 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 EkAdasiis throughout the year, in one go. Of this there is no doubt.

Oh tiger among men, whoever fasts on this EkAdasii 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 EkAdasii, even from water."

When the other PANDavas heard about the benefits to be gained by following Jyeshtha-shukla EkAdasii, they resolved to observe it exactly as their grandfather Srila VyAsadeva had explained it to their brother, Bhimasena. All the 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).

Shrila VyAsadeva continued, Oh Bhimasen, therefore you should observe this important fast to remove all your past sinful reactions. You should pray to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna in this way making your sankalpa declaration, 'Oh Lord of all the devas (demigods), Oh Supreme Personality of Godhead, today I shall observe EkAdasii without taking any water. Oh unlimited Anantadev, I shall break fast on the next day, DwAdashii.' Thereafter, to remove all his sins, the devotee should honour this EkAdasii fast with full faith in the Lord and with full control over his senses. Whether his sins are equal in volume to Mount Sumeru or to MandarAchala Hill, if he or she observes this EkAdasii, the sins that have been accumulated all become nullified and are burned to ashes. Such is the great power of this EkAdasii.

"Oh best of human beings, although a person should also give water and cows in charity during this EkAdasii, if for some reason or other he cannot, then he should give a qualified brAhmaNa some cloth or a pot filled with water. Indeed, the merit achieved by giving water alone equals that gained by giving gold ten million times a day.

"Oh Bhima, Lord Sri Krishna has said that whoever observes this EkAdasii should take a Holy bath, give charity to a worthy person, chant the Lord's Holy names on a japa-mAla, and perform some kind of recommended sacrifice, for by doing these things on this day one receives imperishable benefits. There is no need to perform any other kind of religious duty. Observance of this EkAdasii fast alone promotes one to the supreme abode of Sri Vishnu. Oh best of the Kurus, if one donates gold, cloth, or anything else on this day, the merit one obtains is imperishable.

"Remember, whosoever eats any grains on EkAdasii becomes contaminated by sin and verily eats only sin. In effect, he has already become a dog-eater, and after death he suffers a hellish existence. But he who observes this sacred Jyeshtha-shukla EkAdasii and gives something in charity certainly achieves liberation from the cycle of repeated birth and death and attains to

the supreme abode. Observing this EkAdasii, which is merged with DwAdashii, frees one from the horrible sin of killing a brAhmaNa, drinking liquor and wine, becoming envious of one's spiritual master and ignoring his instructions, and continually telling lies.

"Furthermore, Oh best of beings (Jivottama), any man or woman who observes this fast properly and worships the Supreme Lord JalshAyi (He who sleeps on the water), and who on the next day satisfies a qualified brAhmaNa with nice sweets and a donation of cows and money - such a person certainly pleases the Supreme Lord Vasudeva, so much so that one hundred previous generations in his family undoubtedly go to the Supreme Lord's abode, even though they may have been very sinful, of bad character, and guilty of suicide, etc. Indeed, one who observes this amazing EkAdasii rides on a glorious celestial airplane (vimAna) to the Lord's abode.

"One who on this day gives a brAhmaNa a waterpot, 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 EkAdasii.

"One should clean his teeth properly and, without eating or drinking, observe this EkAdasii to please the Supreme Lord, Keshava. On the day after EkAdasii one should worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His form as Trivikrama by offering Him water, flowers, incense, and a brightly burning lamp. Then the devotee should pray from the heart, 'Oh God of gods, Oh deliverer of everyone, Oh Hrishikesha, master of the senses, kindly bestow upon me the gift of liberation, though I can offer you nothing greater than this humble pot filled with water.' Then the devotee should donate the waterpot to a brAhmaNa.

"Oh Bhimasena, after this EkAdasii fast and donating the recommended items according to his ability, the devotee should feed brAhmaNas and thereafter honour prasAdam silently."

Shrila VyAsadeva concluded, "I strongly urge you to fast on this auspicious, purifying, sin-devouring DwAdashii in just the way I have outlined. Thus you will be completely freed of all sins and reach the supreme abode."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Jyeshtha-shukla EkAdasii, or Bhimaseni-nirjalA EkAdasii, from the Brahma-vaivarta PurANa.

13. YOGINI EKADASI:

Yudhisthira Maharaj said, "Oh Supreme Lord, I have heard the glories of the NirjalA EkAdasii, which occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Jyeshtha (May - June). Now I wish to hear from You about the suddha EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of AshADha (June - July). Kindly describe to me all about it in detail, Oh killer of the Madhu demon (Madhusudana)."

The Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, then replied, "Oh king, I shall indeed tell you about the best of all fasting days, the EkAdasii that comes during the dark part of the month of AshADha. Famous as Yogini EkAdasii, it removes all kinds of sinful reactions and awards supreme liberation.

"Oh best of kings, this EkAdasii delivers people who are drowning in the vast ocean of material existence and transports them to the shore of the spiritual world. In all the three worlds, it is the chief of all sacred fasting days. I shall now reveal this truth to you by narrating a history recounted in the PurANas.

"The king of AlakApuri - Kuvera, the treasurer of the devas (demigods) - was a steadfast devotee of lord Shiva. He employed a servant named HemamAli as his personal gardener. HemamAli, a Yaksha like Kuvera, was very lustfully attracted to his gorgeous wife, SwarUpavatii, who had large, enchanting eyes.

"HemamAli's daily duty was to visit MANasarovara Lake and bring back flowers for his master, Kuvera, with which he would use them in the puja offerings to lord Shiva. One day, after picking the flowers, HemamAli went to his wife instead of returning directly to his master and fulfilling his duty by bringing the flowers for the puja. Absorbed in loving affairs of a bodily nature with his wife, he forgot to return to the abode of Kuvera.

"Oh king, while HemamAli was enjoying with his wife, Kuvera had begun the worship of lord Shiva as normal in his palace and soon discovered that there were no flowers ready to be offered in the midday pUjA. The lack of such an important item (*upachara*) angered the great Koshad-yaksha (treasurer of the devas) even more, and he asked a Yaksha messenger, 'Why has dirty-hearted HemamAli not come with the daily offering of flowers? Go find out the exact reason and report back to me in person with your findings.' The Yaksha returned and told Kuvera, 'Oh dear lord, HemamAli has become lost in freely enjoying coitus with his wife.'

"Kuvera became extremely angry when he heard this and at once summoned lowly HemamAli before him. Knowing that he had been remiss and dawdling in his duty and exposed as meditating on his wife's body, HemamAli approached his master in great fear. The gardener first paid his obeisances and then stood before his lord, whose eyes had become red with anger and whose lips trembled in rage. So enraged, Kuvera cried out to HemamAli, 'Oh you sinful rascal! Oh destroyer of religious principles! You are a walking offense to the devas! I therefore curse you to suffer from white leprosy and to become separated from your beloved wife! Only great suffering is deservedly yours! Oh lowborn fool, leave this place immediately and betake yourself to the lower planets to suffer!'

"And so HemamAli fell at once from grace in AlakApuri and became ill with the terrible affliction of white leprosy. He awoke in a dense and fearful forest, where there was nothing to eat or drink. Thus he passed his days in misery, unable to sleep at night due to pain. He suffered in both winter and summer season, but because he continued to worship lord Shiva himself with faith, his consciousness remained purely fixed and steady. Although implicated by great sin and its attendant reactions, he remembered his past life because of his piety.

"After wandering for some time here and there, over mountains and across plains, HemamAli eventually came upon the vast expanse of the HimAlayan mountain ranges. There he had the wonderful good fortune to come in contact with the great saintly soul MarkaNDeya Rishi, the best of ascetics, whose duration of life it is said, extends to seven of the days of BrahmA.

"MarkaNDeya Rishi was seated peacefully at his Ashrama, looking as effulgent as a second BrahmA. HemamAli, feeling very sinful, stood at a distance from the magnificent sage and offered his humble obeisances and

choice prayers. Always interested in the welfare of others, MarkaNDeya Rishi saw the leper and called him near, "Oh you, what sort of sinful deeds have you done to earn this dreadful affliction?"

"Hearing this, HemamAli painfully and ashamed replied, 'Dear sir, I am a Yaksha servant of lord Kuvera, and my name is HemamAli. It was my daily service to pick the flowers from the MANasarovara lake for my master's worship of lord Shiva, but one day I was negligent and was late in returning with the offering because I had become overwhelmed with lusty passion for enjoying bodily pleasures with my wife. When my master discovered why I was late, he cursed me in great anger to be as I am before you. Thus I am now bereft of my home, my wife, and my service. But fortunately I have come upon you, and now I hope to receive from you an auspicious benediction, for I know that devotees such as you are as merciful as the Supreme Lord (Bhakta Vatsala) and always carry the interest of others uppermost in their hearts. That is their - your nature. Oh best of sages, please help me!'

"Softhearted MarkaNDeya Rishi replied, 'Because you have told me the truth, I shall tell you about a fast day that will benefit you greatly. If you fast on the EkAdasii that comes during the dark fortnight of the month of AshADha, you will surely be freed of this terrible curse.'

HemamAli fell to the ground in complete gratitude and offered him his humble obeisances again and again. But MarkaNDeya Rishi stood there and lifted poor HemamAli to his feet, filling him with inexpressible happiness.

"Thus, as the sage had instructed him, HemamAli dutifully observed the EkAdasii fast, and by its influence he again became a handsome Yaksha. Then he returned home, where he lived very happily with his wife."

Lord Sri Krishna concluded, "So, you can readily see, Oh Yudhishtira that fasting on Yogini EkAdasii is very powerful and auspicious. Whatever merit one obtains by feeding eighty-eight thousand brahmins is also obtained simply by observing a strict fast on Yogini EkAdasii. For one who fasts on this sacred EkAdasii, she (EkAdasii Devi), destroys heaps of past sinful reactions and makes him most pious. Oh King, thus I have explained to you the purity of Yogini EkAdasii."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of AshADha-krishna EkAdasii, or Yogini EkAdasii, from the Brahma-vaivarta PurANa.

14. SAYANA / PADMA EKADASI:

The saintly king Yudhishtira Maharaj said, "Oh Keshava, what is the name of that EkAdasii that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of AshADha (June - July)? Who is the worshipable Deity for the auspicious day, and what is the process for observing this event?"

Lord Sri Krishna replied, "Oh caretaker of this Earthly planet, I shall gladly tell you a wonderful historical event that the deva lord BrahmA once narrated to his son NArad Muni.

"One day NArad Muni asked his father, 'What is the name of the EkAdasii that comes during the light part of the month of AshADha', much as you did? 'Kindly tell me how I should observe this EkAdasii and thus please the Supreme Lord, Sri Vishnu.'

"Lord BrahmA replied, 'Oh great saintly orator, O best of all sages, Oh purest devotee of Lord Vishnu, your question is as usual excellent for all mankind. There is nothing better than EkAdasii, the day of Lord Sri Hari, in this or any other world. It nullifies even the worst sins if observed properly. For this reason I shall tell you about this AshADha-shukla EkAdasii.

'Fasting on this EkAdasii purifies one of all sins and fulfills all ones desires. Therefore, whoever neglects to observe this sacred fast day is a good candidate for entering into hell. AshADha-shukla EkAdasii is also famous as PadmA EkAdasii. Just to please the Supreme Lord Hrishikesha, the master of the senses, one should fast on this day. Listen carefully, Oh NArad, as I relate to you a wonderful historical event that was recorded in the scriptures regarding this EkAdasii. Just hearing this account destroys all kinds of sins, along with all obstacles on the path to spiritual perfection.

'Oh son, there was once a saintly king in the Surya Vamsha (Sun dynasty) whose name was MAndhAtA. Because he always stood up for the truth, he was appointed emperor. He took care of his subjects as though they were his very own family members and children. On account of his piety and great religiosity, there was no pestilence, drought, or disease of any kind in his entire kingdom. All his subjects were not only free of all kinds of

disturbances but also were very wealthy. The king's own treasury was free of any ill-gotten moneys, and thus he ruled happily for many years.

‘Once, however, because of some sin in his kingdom, there was a drought for three years. The subjects found themselves beset by famine also. The lack of food grains made it impossible for them to perform the prescribed Vedic sacrifices, offer oblations of *grita* (ghee) to their forefathers and to the devas, engage in any ritualistic worship, or even study the Vedic literatures. Finally, they all came before their beloved king in a great assembly and addressed him thus, ‘Oh king, you always see to our welfare, so we humbly beg your assistance now. Everyone and everything in this world needs water. Without water, almost everything is rendered useless or dead. The Vedas call water *nAra*, and because the Supreme Personality of Godhead sleeps upon water, His another name is NArAyana. God makes His own abode on water and takes His rest there.

It is said that three things cannot exist without water; pearls, human beings, and flour. The essential quality of a pearl is its luster, and that is due to water. The essence of a man is his semen, whose main constituent is water. And without water, flour cannot be made into dough and then be cooked into various forms of bread, offered and eaten. Sometimes water is called *jalanArAyaNa*, the Supreme Lord in the form of this life sustaining substance - water.

In His form as the clouds, the Supreme Lord is present throughout the sky and pours forth rains, from which grow the grains that maintain every living entity.

‘ "Oh king, the severe drought has caused a great lack of valuable grains; thus we are all miserable, and the population is decreasing as people die off or leave your kingdom. Oh best ruler on Earth, please find some solutions to this problem and bring us to peace and prosperity once again.

‘The king replied, "You speak the truth, for grains are like Brahman, the Absolute Truth, who lives within grains and thereby sustains all beings. Indeed, it is because of grains that the entire world lives. Now, why is there a terrible drought in our kingdom? The Holy Scriptures discuss this subject very thoroughly. If a king (or head of the country) is irreligious, both he and his subjects suffer. I have meditated upon the cause of our problem for a long time, but after searching my past and present character I can honestly

say that I find no sin. Still, for the good of all you subjects, I shall try to remedy the situation. Thinking in this way, King MAndhAtA assembled his army and entourage. Paid his obeisances to me, and then entered the forest. He wandered here and there, seeking great sages in their Ashrams and inquiring about how to resolve the crisis in his kingdom. At last he came upon the ashram of one of my other sons, AngirA Muni, whose effulgence lit up all directions. Seated in his hermitage, AngirA looked like a second BrahmA. King MAndhAtA was very pleased to see that exalted sages, whose senses were completely under control.

‘The king immediately dismounted his horse and offered his respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of AngirA Muni. Then the king joined his palms and prayed for the Muni’s blessings. That saintly person reciprocated by blessing the king with sacred mantras; then he asked him about the welfare of the seven limbs of his kingdom. The seven limbs of a king’s domain are

1. the king himself;
2. the ministers;
3. his treasury;
4. his military forces;
5. his allies;
6. the brahmins;
7. the sacrificial performances performed in the kingdom and the needs of the subjects under his care.

‘After telling the sage how the seven limbs of his kingdom were situated, King MAndhAtA asked the sage about his own situation, and if he was happy. Then AngirA Muni asked the king why he had undertaken such a difficult journey into the forest, and the king told him of the affliction his kingdom was suffering. The king said, "Oh great sage, I am ruling and maintaining my kingdom while following the Vedic injunctions, and thus I do not know the reason for the drought. To solve this mystery, I have approached you for help. Please help me relieve the suffering of my subjects.

‘ANgira Rishi said to the king, ‘The present age, Satya yuga, is the best of all ages, for in this age Dharma stands on all four legs (Truthfulness, Austerity, Mercy, and Cleanliness). In this age everyone respects Brahmins as the topmost members of society. Also, everyone fulfills his occupational duties, and only twice-born Brahmins are allowed to perform Vedic

austerities and penances. Although this is a standard, Oh lion among kings, there is one shudra (uninitiated, untrained person) who is unlawfully performing the rites of austerity and penance in your kingdom. This is why there is no rain in your land. You should therefore punish this laborer with death, for by so doing you will remove the contamination inflicted by his actions and restore peace to your subjects.

‘The king then replied, "How can I kill an offense-less performer of austerity and sacrifice? Please give me some spiritual solution.

‘The great sage ANgirA Muni then said, "Oh king, you should observe a fast on the EkAdasii that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of AshADha. This auspicious day is named PadmA EkAdasii, and by its influence plentiful rains and thus grains and other foodstuffs will surely return to your kingdom. This EkAdasii bestows perfection upon its faithful observers, removes all kinds of bad elements, and destroys all obstacles on the path to perfection. Oh king, you, your relatives, and your subjects should all observe this sacred EkAdasii fast. Then everything in your kingdom will undoubtedly return to normal. ‘Upon hearing these words, the king offered his obeisances and then returned to his palace. When the PadmA EkAdasii arrived, King MAndhAtA assembled all the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and shudras in his kingdom and instructed them to strictly observe this important fast day. After they had observed it, the rains fell, just as the sage had predicted, and in due course of time there were abundant crops and a rich harvest of grain. By the mercy of the Supreme Lord Hrishikesha, the master of the senses, all the subjects of King MAndhAtA became extremely happy and prosperous.

‘Therefore, Oh Narada, everyone should observe this EkAdasii fast very strictly, for it bestows all kinds of happiness, as well as ultimate liberation, upon the faithful devotee’

Lord Sri Krishna concluded, "My dear Yudhishtira, PadmA Ekadasi is so powerful that one who simply reads or hears its glories becomes completely sinless. Oh PANDava, one who wishes to please Me should strictly observe this EkAdasii, which is also known as Deva-sayani EkAdasii

Deva-sayani, or Vishnu-sayani, indicates the day when Lord Vishnu goes to sleep with all the devas (demigods). It is said that after this day one should not perform any new auspicious ceremonies until DevotthAni EkAdasii

([Haribodhini \(Probodhini\) Devotthaani \(Utthana\) EkAdasii](#)), which occurs during the month of KArtika (October - November), because the devas (demigods), being asleep, cannot be invited to the sacrificial arena and because the Sun is traveling along its Southern course (Dakshinayanam).

"Lord Sri Krishna continued, "Oh lion among kings, Yudhishtira Maharaj, whoever wants liberation should regularly observe a fast on this EkAdasi which is also the day when the [Chaturmasya fast](#) begins.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of the AshADha-shukla EkAdasii - also known as PadmA EkAdasii or Deva-sayani EkAdasii - from the Bhavishya-uttara PurANa.

15. **KAMIKA EKADASI:**

The saintly king Yudhishtira maharaj said, "Oh Supreme Lord, I have heard from You the glories of fasting on [Deva-sayani EkAdasii](#), which occurs during the light fortnight of the month of AshADha. Now I would like to hear from You the glories of the EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight (krishna paksha) of the month of ShrAvaNa (July -August). Oh Govindadeva, please be merciful to me and explain its glories. Oh Supreme VAsudeva, I offer my most humble obeisances unto You.

The Supreme Lord, Shri Krishna, replied, "Oh King, please listen attentively as I describe the auspicious influence of this Holy fast (vrata) day, which removes all sins. Narada Muni once asked Lord BrahmA about this same topic. 'Oh regent of all beings,' said NAradji, 'Oh you who sit upon a water born lotus throne, please tell me the name of the EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight of the sacred month of ShrAvaNa. Please also tell me which Deity is to be worshipped on that Holy day, the process one must follow to observe it, and the merit it awards.'

Lord BrahmA replied, 'My dear son Narada, for the benefit of all humanity I shall happily tell you everything you wish to know, for just hearing the glories of the KAmika EkAdasii bestows merit equal to that obtained by one who performs a horse sacrifice. Certainly, great merit is attained by one who worships, and who also meditates on the lotus feet of the four-armed Lord GadAdhara, who holds conchshell, disc, club and lotus in His hands and who is also known as Shridhara, Hari, Vishnu, Madhava, and MadhusUdana. And the blessings achieved by such a person / devotee, who

worships Lord Vishnu exclusively are far greater than those achieved by one who takes a sacred bath in the Ganges at KAshi (VarANasii), in the forest of NaimishAraNya, or at Pushkara, which is the only place on the planet where I am formally worshipped. But one who observes this KAmika EkAdasii and also worships Lord Shri Krishna achieves greater merit than one who has *darshan* of Lord KedAranAtha in the HimAlayas, or one who bathes at Kurukshetra during a solar eclipse, or one who donates the whole Earth in charity, including its forests and oceans, or one who bathes in the GaNDaki River (where the sacred Shaligrams are found) or the GodAvari River on a full moon (*purnima*) day that falls on a Monday when Leo (Simha) and Jupiter (Guru) are conjoined (conjunct).

'Observing KAmika EkAdasii bestows the same merit as donating a milk-cow and her auspicious calf, along with their feed. On this all auspicious day, whosoever worships Lord Sri Shridhara-deva, Vishnu, is glorified by all the devas, Gandharvas, Pannagas, and NAgas.

'Those who are afraid of their past sins and completely immersed in sinful materialistic life should at least observe this best of EkAdasiis according to their ability and thus attain liberation. This EkAdasii is the purest of all days and the most powerful for removing sins of the native. Oh Narad ji, Lord Shri Hari Himself once said about this EkAdasii, "One who fasts on KAmika EkAdasii attains much more merit than one who studies all the spiritual literatures.

'Anyone who fasts on this particular day remains awake throughout the night will never experience the anger of YamarAja, the king of death personified. It has been seen that whoever observes KAmika EkAdasii will not have to suffer future births, and in the past too, many Yogis of devotion who fasted on this day went to the spiritual world. One should therefore follow in their auspicious footsteps and strictly observe a fast on this most auspicious of EkAdasiis.

'Whosoever worships Lord Shri Hari with Tulasi leaves is freed from all implication of sin. Indeed, he lives untouched by sin, as the lotus leaf, although in the water, is untouched by it. Whosoever offers Lord Shri Hari but a single leaf from the sacred Tulasi tree (*occillium basilcum sanctum*) attains as much merit as one who gives away in charity two hundred grams of gold and eight hundred grams of silver. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is more pleased by one who offers Him a single Tulasi leaf than by

one who worships Him with pearls, rubies, topaz, diamonds, lapis lazuli, sapphires, gomedA stones (gomaz), cat's eye gems, and coral. One who offers Lord Keshava newly grown maNjari buds from the Tulasi plant gets rid of all the sins he has committed during this or any other lifetime. Indeed, mere darshana of Tulasi on KAmikA EkAdasii removes all sins, and merely touching her and praying to her removes all kinds of disease. One who waters Tulasi devi need never fear the Lord of death, YamarAja. One who plants or transplants Tulasi on this days will eventually reside with Lord Shri Krishna in His own abode. To Srimati Tulasi devi, who awards liberation in devotional service, one should therefore daily offer one's full obeisances.

'Even Chitrugupta, YamarAja's secretary, cannot calculate the merit obtained by one who offers Shrimati Tulasi-devi a perpetually burning ghee lamp. So dear is this sacred EkAdasii to the Supreme Personality of Godhead that all the forefathers of one who offers a bright ghee lamp to Lord Shri Krishna on this day ascend to the heavenly planets and drink the celestial nectar there. Whoever offers a ghee or sesame oil lamp to Shri Krishna on this day is freed from all his sins and enters the abode of Surya, the Sun-god, with a body as bright as ten million lamps. This EkAdasii is so powerful that if one who is unable to fast simply follows the practices as mentioned herein, s/he is elevated to the heavenly planets, along with all their forefathers.

'Oh Maharaj Yudhisthira, Lord Shri Krishna concluded, "...these were the words of prajapathi Brahma to his son Narad Muni concerning the incalculable glories of this KAmikA EkAdasii, which removes all sins. This sacred day nullifies even the sin of killing a brAhmaNa or the sin of killing an unborn child in the womb, and it promotes one to the spiritual world by making one supremely meritorious.

One who kills the innocent, i.e., a brahmin (brAhmaNa), a child in the womb, a pious and spotless woman, etc., and then later hears about the glories of KAmikA EkAdasii will be relieved of the reaction to one's sins. However, one should NOT think beforehand that one can kill a Brahmin or other innocent folk and then go unpunished simply by hearing of this EkAdasii. Such knowing commission of sin is an abomination.

Whosoever hears these glories of the KAmikA EkAdasii with faith becomes free of all sins and returns home, back to Godhead - Vishnu-loka, Vaikuntha.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of the ShrAvaNa-kRshNa EkAdasii, or KAmikA EkAdasii, from the Brahma-Vaivarta PurANa.

16. PAVITROPANA EKADASI:

Shri Yudhisthira Maharaja said, "Oh Madhusudana, Oh killer of the Madhu demon, please be merciful to me and describe to me the EkAdasii that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Shravana (July-August)." The Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, replied, "Yes, Oh king, I shall happily narrate its glories to you, for just by hearing about this sacred EkAdasii one attains the merit of performing a horse sacrifice.

"At the dawn of DvArpara-yuga there lived a king by the name of Mahijita, who ruled the kingdom of Mahismati-puri. Because he had no son, his entire kingdom seemed utterly cheerless to him. A married man who has no son gains no happiness in this life or the next.

The Sanskrit word for 'son' is *putra*. *Pu* is the name of a particular hell, and *tra* means 'to deliver.' Thus the word *putra* means 'a person who delivers one from the hell named *Pu*.' Therefore every married man should produce at least one son and train him properly; then the father will be delivered from a hellish condition of life. But this injunction does not apply to the serious devotees of Lord Vishnu or Krishna, for the Lord becomes their son, father, and mother.

Furthermore, ChANakya Pandita says,

| | | | |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| <i>satyam</i> | <i>mata</i> | <i>pita</i> | <i>jnanam</i> |
| <i>dharmo</i> | <i>bhrata</i> | <i>daya</i> | <i>sakha</i> |
| <i>santih</i> | <i>patni</i> | <i>ksama</i> | <i>putrah</i> |

sadete mama vandhavah

"Truth is my mother, knowledge is my father, my occupational duty is my brother, kindness is my friend, tranquility is my wife, and forgiveness is my son. These six are my family members." Among the twenty-six leading qualities of a devotee of the Lord, forgiveness is the topmost. Therefore devotees should make an extra endeavor to develop this quality. Here ChANakya says "forgiveness is my son," and thus a devotee of the Lord, even though he may be on the path of renunciation, may observe this EkAdasii and pray to attain this kind of "son."

For a long time this king tried very hard to obtain an heir, but to no avail. Seeing his years advancing ever onwards, King Mahijita became increasingly anxious. One day he told an assembly of his advisers: 'I have committed no sin in this life, and there is no ill-gotten wealth in my treasury. I have never usurped the offerings to the demigods or brahmanas. When I waged war and conquered kingdoms, I followed the rules and regulations of the military art, and I have protected my subjects as if they were my own children. I punished even my own relatives if they broke the law, and if my enemy was gentle and religious I welcomed him. Oh twice-born souls, although I am a religious and faithful follower of the Vedic standards, still my home is without a son. Kindly tell me the reason for this.'

"Hearing this, the king's brahmana advisers discussed the subject among themselves, and with the aim of benefiting the king they visited the various ashrams of the great sages. At last they came upon a sage who was austere, pure, and self-satisfied, and who was strictly observing a vow of fasting. His senses were completely under control, he had conquered his anger, and he was expert at performing his occupational duty. Indeed, this great sage was expert in all the conclusions of the Vedas, and he had extended his life span to that of Lord Brahma himself. His name was Lomasa Rishi, and he knew past, present, and future. After each *kalpa* passed, one hair would fall out of his body (One *kalpa*, or twelve hours of Lord Brahma, equals 4,320,000,000 years.) All the king's brahmana advisers very happily approached him one by one to offer their humble respects.

"Captivated by this great soul, King Mahijita's advisers offered obeisances to him and said very respectfully, 'Only because of our great good fortune, Oh sage, have we been allowed to see you.' "Lomasa Rishi saw them bowing down to him and replied, 'Kindly let me know why you have come here. Why are you praising me? I must do all I can to solve your problems, for sages like me have only one interest: to help others. Do not doubt this.'

Lomasa Rishi had all good qualities because he was a devotee of the Lord. As stated in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (5:18:12),

| | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <i>yasyasti</i> | <i>bhaktir</i> | <i>bhagavaty</i> | <i>akinchana</i> |
| <i>sarvair</i> | <i>gunais</i> | <i>tatra</i> | <i>samasate</i> |
| <i>harav</i> | <i>abhaktasya</i> | <i>kuto</i> | <i>mahad-guna</i> |
| <i>manorathenasati</i> | <i>dhavato bahih</i> | | |

"In one who has unflinching devotional service to Krishna, all the good qualities of Krishna and the demigods are consistently manifest. However, he who has no devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead has no good qualifications because he is engaged by mental concoction in material existence, which is the external feature of the Lord."

"The king's representatives said, 'We have come to you, Oh exalted sage, to ask for your help in solving a very serious problem. Oh sage, you are like Lord Brahma. Indeed, there is no better sage in the entire world. Our king, Mahijita, is without a son, though he has sustained and protected us as if we were his sons. Seeing him so unhappy on account of being sonless, we have become very sad, Oh sage, and therefore we have entered the forest to perform severe austerities. By our good fortune we happened upon you. Everyone's desires and activities become successful just by your *darshan*. Thus we humbly ask that you tell us how our kind king can obtain a son.'

"Hearing their sincere plea, Lomasa Rishi absorbed himself in deep meditation for a moment and at once understood the king's previous life. Then he said, 'Your ruler was a merchant in his past life, and feeling his wealth insufficient, he committed sinful deeds. He traveled to many villages to trade his goods. Once, at noon on the day after the EkAdasii that comes during the light fortnight of the month of Jyeshtha (Trivikrama – May-June), he became thirsty while traveling from place to place. He came upon a beautiful pond on the outskirts of a village, but just as he was about to drink at the pond a cow arrived there with her new-born calf. These two creatures were also very thirsty because of the heat, but when the cow and calf started to drink, the merchant rudely shoved them aside and selfishly slaked his own thirst. This offense against a cow and her calf has resulted in your king's being without a son now. But the good deeds he performed in his previous life have given him rulership over an undisturbed kingdom.'

"Hearing this, the king's advisers replied, 'Oh renowned rishi, we have heard that the Vedas say one can nullify the effects of one's past sins by acquiring merit. Be so kind as to give us some instruction by which our king's sins can be destroyed; please give him your mercy so that a prince will take birth in his family.'

"Lomasa Rishi said, 'There is an EkAdasii called PutradA, which comes during the light fortnight of the month of Shravana. On this day all of you, including your king, should fast and stay awake all night, strictly following

the rules and regulations. Then you should give the king whatever merit you gain by this fast. If you follow these instructions of mine, he will surely be blessed with a fine son.'

"All the king's advisers became very pleased to hear these words from Lomasa Rishi, and they all offered him their grateful obeisances. Then, their eyes bright with happiness, they returned home.

"When the month of Shravana arrived, the king's advisers remembered the advice of Lomasa Rishi, and under their direction all the citizens of Mahismati-puri, as well as the king, fasted on EkAdasii. And on the next day, DvAdasi, the citizens dutifully offered their accrued merit to him. By the strength of all this merit, the queen became pregnant and eventually gave birth to a most beautiful son.

"O Yudhisthira," Lord Krishna concluded, "the EkAdasii that comes during the light fortnight of the month of Shravana has thus rightfully become famous as PutradA ["bestower of a son"]. Whoever desires happiness in this world and the next should certainly fast from all grains and legumes on this holy day. Indeed, whoever simply hears the glories of PutradA EkAdasii becomes completely free of all sins, is blessed with a good son, and surely ascends to heaven after death."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Shravana-sukla EkAdasii, or PutradA EkAdasii, from the Bhavishya Purana.

17. **ANNADA EKADASI:**

Sri Yudhisthira Maharaja said, "Oh JanArdana, protector of all living entities, please tell me the name of the EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of BhAdrapada (August-September)."

The Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna, then replied, "Oh King, hear Me attentively. The name of this sin-removing, sacred EkAdasii is AjA. Any person who fasts completely on this day and worships Hrishiksha, the master of the senses, becomes free of all reactions to his sins. Even one who simply hears about this EkAdasii is freed from his past sins. Oh King, there is no better day than this in all the earthly and heavenly worlds. This is true without a doubt.

"There once lived a famous king named Harishchandra, who was the emperor of the world and a person of great truth and integrity. His wife's name was Chandramati, and he had a son named LohitAshva. By the force of destiny, however, Harishchandra lost his great kingdom and sold his wife and son. The pious king himself became a menial servant of a dog-eater, who made him guard a crematorium. Yet even while doing such menial service, he did not forsake his truthfulness and good character, just as *soma-rasa*, even when mixed with some other liquid, does not lose its ability to bestow
immortality.

"The king passed many years in this condition. Then one day he sadly thought, 'What shall I do? Where shall I go? How can I be delivered from this plight?' In this way he drowned in an ocean of anxiety and sorrow.

"One day a great sage happened by, and when the king saw him he happily thought, 'Ah, Lord Brahma has created brahmins just to help others.' Harishchandra paid his respectful obeisances to the sage, whose name was Gautama Muni. With joined palms the king stood before Gautama Muni and narrated his pitiful story. Gautama Muni was astonished to hear the king's tale of woe. He thought, 'How has this mighty king been reduced to collecting clothes from the dead?' Gautama Muni became very much compassionate toward Harishchandra and instructed him on the process of fasting
for
purification.

"Gautama Muni said, 'Oh king, during the dark fortnight of the month of BhAdrapada there occurs an especially meritorious EkAdasii named AjA (AnnadA), which removes all sins. Indeed, this EkAdasii is so auspicious that if you simply fast on that day and perform no other austerity, all your sins will be nullified. By your good fortune it is coming in just seven days. So I urge you to fast on this day and remain awake through the night. If you do so, all the reactions of your past sins will come to an end. Oh Harishchandra, I have come here because of your past pious deeds. Now, all good fortune to you in the future!' So saying, the great sage Sri Gautama Muni immediately disappeared from his vision.

"King Harishchandra followed Gautama Muni's instructions concerning fasting on the sacred day of AjA EkAdasii. Oh Maharaja Yudhisthira, because the king fasted on that day, the reactions to his previous sins were completely destroyed at once. Oh lion among kings, just see the influence of

this EkAdasii fast! It immediately vanquishes whatever miseries one may be suffering as a result of past karmic sinful activities.

Thus all Harishchandra's miseries were relieved. Just by the power of this wonderful EkAdasii, he was reunited with his wife and son, who had died but were now revived. In the heavenly regions the *devas* (demigods) began beating on their celestial kettledrums and showering down flowers upon Harishchandra, his queen, and their son. By the blessings of the EkAdasii fast, he regained his kingdom without difficulty. Moreover, when King Harishchandra left the planet, his relatives and all his subjects too, went with him to the spiritual world.

"Oh PANDava, whoever fasts on AjA EkAdasii is surely freed from all his sins and ascends to the spiritual world. And whosoever hears and studies the glories of this EkAdasii achieves the merit gained by performing a horse sacrifice."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of BhAdrapada-krishna EkAdasii, or AjA EkAdasii, from the Brahma-vaivarta PurANa.

18. **PARSVA EKADASI:**

Sri Yudhishtira MahArAja asked of Lord Sri Krishna, "What is the name of that EkAdasii that occurs during the light fortnight (*shukla paksha*) of the month of BhAdrapada (August-September "*Hrishikesh mase*")? Who is the worshipable Deity for this EkAdasii, and what merit does one attain in observing it? Kindly reveal all of this to me my Lord."

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Sri Krishna addressed His devoted Yudhishtira as follows, "This EkAdasii, Oh Yudhishtira, is called VAmāna EkAdasii, and it bestows upon those who observe it both great merit and ultimate liberation from material bondage. Therefore, because it removes all one's sinful reactions, it is also called Jayanti EkAdasii. Just hearing of its glories frees one from all his past misdeeds. So auspicious is this fast that observing it bestows the same merit as that earned by performing a horse sacrifice. There is no better EkAdasii than this, because it awards liberation so easily. Thus if one truly desires freedom from the punishing material world, one should fast on VAmāna EkAdasii.

"While observing this holy fast, a Vaishnava should lovingly worship the Supreme Lord in His form as VAmadev, the dwarf incarnation, whose eyes are like lotus petals. By doing so, he worships all other Deities as well, including Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and at death he undoubtedly goes to that abode of Sri Hari. In all the three worlds there is no fast that is more important to observe. The reason this EkAdasii is so auspicious is that it celebrates the day when the sleeping Lord Vishnu turns over on His other side; thus it is also known as Parivartinii EkAdasii."

MahArAja Yudhishtira then asked of the Lord, "Oh JanArdana, please clear up a question I have. How is it that the Supreme Lord sleeps and then turns over on His side? Oh Lord, when You are asleep what happens to all the other living entities? Please also tell me how You bound the king of the demons, Bali DaityarAj (Bali MahArAja), as well as how one may please the brAhmaNas. How does one observe ChAturmAsya, which You mention in the ChAturmAsya-mahAtmya of the Bhavishya PurANa? Kindly be merciful to me and answer these questions."

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna replied, "Oh Yudhishtira, lion among Kings, I will gladly narrate to you an historical event that, simply by hearing, eradicates all one's sinful reactions. "In the TretA-yuga there once was a king of the name Bali. Though born in a family dynasty of demons (daityas), he was very devoted to Me. He sang many Vedic hymns to Me and performed the *homa* rituals (fire sacrifices) just to satisfy Me. He respected the twice-born brahmins and engaged them in performing sacrifices daily. This great soul had a quarrel with Indra, however, and eventually defeated him in battle. Bali took over his entire celestial kingdom, which I Myself had given to Indra. Therefore Indra and all the other devas (demigods), along with many great sages, approached Me and complained about Bali MahArAja. Bowing their heads to the ground and offering many sacred prayers from the Vedas, they worshipped Me along with their spiritual master, Brihaspati. Thus I agreed to appear on their behalf as a dwarf VAmadev, My fifth incarnation."

King Yudhishtira further enquired, "Oh Lord, how was it possible for You to conquer such a powerful demon, and only by coming in the form of a dwarf brahmin? Please explain this clearly, for I am Your faithful devotee." The Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna replied, "Though a dwarf, I was a brAhmaNa, and I approached that pious king Bali to ask him for alms in the form of land. I said, 'Oh DaityarAj Bali, please give Me just three steps of

land in charity. Such a small piece of land will be good as all the three worlds for Me.' Bali agreed to grant My request without lengthy consideration. But as soon as he vowed to give Me the land, My body began to expand into a gigantic transcendental form. I covered the entire Earth with My feet, all the Bhuvanloka with My thighs, the Swarga heavens with My waist, Maharloka with My stomach, Janaloka with My chest, Tapaloka with My neck, and Satyaloka with My head and face. I covered the entire material creation. Indeed, all the planets of the universe, including the Sun and the Moon, were encompassed by My gigantic form."

"Seeing this astonishing pastime of Mine, all the demigods, including Indra and Shesha, the king of the snakes, began to sing Vedic hymns and offer prayers to Me. Then I took Bali by the hand and said to him, 'Oh sinless one, I have covered the whole Earth with one step and all the heavenly planets with the second. Now where shall I place My foot to measure the third step of land you promised Me?'"

"Upon hearing this, Bali MahArAja bowed down in humility and offered Me his head to place My third step. Oh Yudhishtira, I placed My foot on his head and sent him all the way to PAtAlaloka. Seeing him thus humbled, I became very pleased and told Bali that henceforth I would permanently reside in his palace. Thereafter, on Parivartinii EkAdasii, which occurs during the light part of the month of BhAdra (August-September), Bali, the son of Virochana, grandson of Prahlada, installed a Deity form of Me in his residence. "Oh king, until Haribodhini EkAdasii, which occurs during the light part of the month of Karttika, I continue to sleep in the ocean of milk. The merit one accumulates during this period is particularly powerful. One should therefore observe Parivartinii EkAdasii carefully. Indeed, it is especially purifying and thus cleanses one of all sinful reactions. On this day the faithful devotee should worship Lord Trivikrama, VAmanadeva, who is the supreme father, because on this day I turn over to sleep on My other side. "If possible, on this day one should give a qualified person some yogurt mixed with rice, as well as some silver, and then remain awake throughout the night. This simple observance will free one of all material conditioning. One who observes this sacred Parivartinii EkAdasii in the way I have described will surely attain all kinds of happiness in this world and the kingdom of God in the hereafter. One who simply hears this narration with devotion will go to the abode of the demigods and shine there like the Moon itself, so powerful is observance of this EkAdasii. Indeed, this observance is as powerful as the performance of a thousand horse sacrifices."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Parivartinii EkAdasii, or VAmāna EkAdasii, which occurs during the light part of the month of BhAdrapada, from the Brahma-vaivarta PurANa.

NOTE: The next day after Ekadashi is Sri Vamana Dvadashi: Appearance day of Lord Vamanadev. Ekadashi fast is observed till noon. The fast is broken after noon with Ekadashi prasadam. Next day (Sri Vamana Dvadashi), observe Lord Vamanadev's appearance by again fasting till noon and by chanting extra Mahamantra japa praying to the Lord for His shelter. Break this fast with joyful feasting of Lord Vamanadev's appearance day mahaprasadam!

19. INDIRA EKADASI:

Yudhishthira Maharaj said, "Oh MadhusUdana, Oh killer of the Madhu demon, what is the name of the EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight (*krishna paksha*) of the month of Ashwin (September-October)? Please describe its glories to me."

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna then replied, "This Holy day is called IndirA EkAdasii. 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 EkAdasii 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-puri. The glorious and highly religious King Indrasena took good care of his subjects, and therefore he was rich in gold, grains, sons, and grandsons. He was greatly devoted to Lord Sri Vishnu as well. He especially enjoyed chanting My name, calling out 'Govinda! Govinda!' 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. White as a conch, shining like the moon, like a jasmine flower, like a lightening bolt, NArada Muni descending from the sky. He is decorated with matted

locks of reddish hair. The king offered Devarishi NArada, the saint among the devas (demigods), great respect by greeting him with joined palms, inviting him into the palace, offering him a comfortable seat, washing his feet, and speaking sweet words of welcome. Then NArada Muni said to MahArAj Indrasena, 'Oh king, are the seven limbs of your kingdom prospering?'

The seven limbs of a king's domain being; the king's well being himself, his ministers, his treasury, his military forces, his allies, the braAhmaNas, the sacrifices performed in his kingdom, and the needs of the king's subjects.

'Is your mind absorbed in thinking of how you can properly perform your occupational duty? Are you becoming more and more devoted and dedicated to the service of the Supreme Lord, Sri Vishnu?'

"The king replied, 'By your kind grace, Oh greatest of sages, everything is quite well. Today, just by your presence all the sacrifices in my kingdom are successful ! Please show me mercy and explain the reason for your kind visit here.'

"Sri NArada, the sage among the *devas*, then said, 'Oh lion among kings, listen to my astonishing words. When I descended from BrahmaloKa to Yamaloka, Lord YamarAja praised me very graciously and offered me an excellent seat. As I glorified his truthfulness and wonderful service to the Supreme Lord, I noticed your father in YamarAja's assembly. Though he had been very religious, because he broke an EkAdasii 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 EkAdasii and give much in charity so I can go upward to heaven.' "

Philosophically we can understand that every living entity is an individual, and individually everyone has to practice Krishna consciousness to traverse back to home, back to Godhead. As stated in GaruDa PurANa, someone who is suffering in hell cannot practice Krishna consciousness, because this requires some mental peace, which the reactionary tortures of hell make impossible. If a relative of a sinner suffering in hell gives some charity in the name of the sinner, he can leave hell and enter the heavenly planets. But if

the sinner's relative observes this EkAdasii fast for his suffering kinsman, the kinsman goes directly to the spiritual world, as stated in this narration based on Brahma-vaivarta PurANam.

"NArada continued, 'Just to deliver this message, Oh king, have I come to you. You should help your father by observing the fast of IndirA EkAdasii. By the merit you gain, your father will go to heaven.' "King Indrasena asked, 'Oh great NAradji, please be merciful and tell me specifically how to observe a fast on IndirA EkAdasii, 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 EkAdasii. This EkAdasii occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Ashwin. On the *Dashami tithi*, the day before EkAdasii, 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 EkAdasii 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 Personality of Godhead, 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 (obviously non-grain prasadam) 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 Hrishikesha 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 you relatives, and finally take your meal in silence. Oh king, if you strictly observe a fast on IndirA EkAdasii 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 EkAdasii, 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 EkAdasii, or IndirA EkAdasii, taken from the Brahma-vaivarta PurANa.

20. PADMINI EKADASI:

Sri SUta Goswami said, "Yudhishtira MahArAja said, Oh JanArdana, what is the name of the EkAdasii 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 Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna, replied, 'Oh PANDava, the meritorious EkAdasii 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 My personal abode. This extra-month EkAdasii 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 EkAdasii.'

"Lotus-eyed Lord Krishna became very pleased by the enquiry of Yudhishtira and spoke to him the following pleasing words: 'Oh king, please listen carefully as I narrate to you the process of fasting on PadminI EkAdasii, which is rarely done even by great sages.

""One should begin his fast on the Dashami, the day before EkAdasii, by not eating any *Urad* dAhl, pink dAhl, 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 EkAdasii the devotee should rise early in the morning but should not 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 obeisances unto you. Kindly purify me so I may worship the Supreme Lord, Sri Hari. ""Oh cow-dung, you posses 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 obeisances and purify me. ""Oh *Amalaki* fruits, please accept my humble obeisances. 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 Yudhishthira, 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 EkAdasii 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 low-born 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 EkAdasii, 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 EkAdasii night, singing and playing musical instruments for the transcendental pleasure of the Supreme Person.

"During the first quarter of the EkAdasii night the devotee should offer some coconut meat to his worshippable Deity (*Isthadeva*), during the second part he should offer soothing *bel* fruit, 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 *EkAdasii* night bestows on the devotee/*sadhaka* the same merit as that gained by performing the *Agnistoma-yajna*. 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 *Ashvamedha-yajna*. 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 EkAdasii. 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 EkAdasii 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 Yudhishthira, as you have requested, I have described the rules and regulations, as well as the benefits, regarding the EkAdasii 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 EkAdasiis. The EkAdasii that occurs during the dark part of the extra month, which is known as Parama EkAdasii, 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 KartaviryArjuna, 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 KartaviryArjuna defeat Ravana, who was so skilled in battle?"

"Pulastya Muni replied, "Oh great Narada, during the TretaYuga, Kartaviry (KartaviryArjuna'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, just as a hungry man can never really enjoy his senses.

"King Kartaviry carefully considered his plight and then decided to perform severe austerities to achieve his goal. Thus he donned a loin cloth 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 Kartaviry reached the summit of Mount Gandhamadana, where

he performed severe austerities and penances 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 EkAdasiis that occur during this month are called Padmini EkAdasii and ParamA EkAdasii. They fall on the DvAdasiis 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 Personality of Godhead, 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 EkAdasii 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 EkAdasiis that occur during this month are the most dear to Me of all EkAdasiis. 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 KArtaViryaArjuna 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 EkAdasii, he could defeat even the dreaded RAvana. This is not at all surprising, Oh NAradji, for KArtaViryaArjuna was the fulfillment of the benediction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead." 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 EkAdasii. Oh best of kings, whoever observes this fast will surely attain to My personal abode. And similarly, if you want all your desires fulfilled, you should do likewise.'

"Hearing these words from the mouth of his beloved Keshava, DharmarAja (Yudhishtira) became filled with joy, and when the time came he faithfully observed PadminI EkAdasii."

SUta Goswami concluded, "Oh sage Saunaka, I have explained to you all about this meritorious EkAdasii. Anyone who devotedly fasts on the EkAdasiis that occur during the extra, leap-year months, carefully following all the rules, becomes glorious and happily goes back to Godhead. And one who merely hears or reads about these EkAdasiis will also obtain great merit and ultimately enter the abode of Lord Sri Hari."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of PadminI EkAdasii, the EkAdasii that occurs during the light fortnight of the extra, leap-year month of Purushottama, from the Skanda PurANa.

21. **PARAMA EKADASI:**

Sri Yudhishthira MahArAja said, "Oh Supreme Lord, what is the name and character of that EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight (*krishna paksha*) of the extra, leap year month of Purushottama. Also, Oh master of all the universes, what is the process for observing it properly? Kindly narrate all of this to me?"

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna, replied, "Oh Yudhishthira, this meritorious day is called ParamA EkAdasii. It bestows the great benediction of an enjoyable life and ultimate liberation, release from birth and death. The process for observing it is similar to that for observing the EkAdasii that occurs during the light part of this month of Kartika. That is to say, on this EkAdasii one should worship Me, the best of all living beings, with full love and devotion. In this connection I will now tell you a wonderful history, just as I heard it from the great sage in the city of KAmPilya.

"Once a very pious brahmin named SumedhA resided in KAmPilya with his wife, PavitrA, who was extremely chaste and devoted to her husband. On account of having committed some sin in his previous life, SumedhA was without any money or food grains, and even though he begged many people for food, he could not obtain any substantial amount. He hardly had adequate food, clothing, or shelter for himself and his beautiful young wife, who was of such excellent character that she continued to serve SumedhA faithfully despite their poverty. When guests would come to their home, PavitrA mataji would give them her own food, and although she often went hungry, her beautiful, lotuslike face never faded. This fasting made her weak, but her affection for SumedhA remained unbreakable.

"Seeing all this, and lamenting his bad luck, SumedhA one day said to PavitrA, 'My dear wife, Oh most beautiful one, I beg alms from the rich but receive scarcely a scrap. What am I to do? What possible relief is there for our plight? Where should I go for relief? Oh most obedient and loving wife, without enough wealth, household affairs are never successful. - *na vandhu*

madhye dhanahina jivanam. Therefore please permit me to go abroad and attain some wealth. If I make such an effort, I shall certainly obtain whatever fortune I am destined to enjoy. Without making some endeavour a person cannot satisfy his desires or meet his needs. Thus wise men have said that enthusiastic endeavour is always auspicious.' The revealed scriptures declare, *udyoginah siNgham upaiti laxmi daivena deyati kA purushAh vadantii:* "One who endeavours enthusiastically will certainly attain success, but one who merely says, 'I accept my lot in life' is a lazy man".

"Upon hearing this from her husband as he spoke these words, PavitrA joined her palms and, her eyes brimming with tears, spoke to him with great respect and affection: 'I think there is no one greater or more learned than you, my dear. One who, though in misery, is interested in the welfare of others speaks just as you have. However, the scriptures state that whatever wealth a person attains in his life is due to his having given charity in previous lives, and that if one has not given charity in previous lives, then even though he may sit atop a mound of gold as big as Mount Sumeru, he will still remain poor.

purva-janmArjitaM vidyA purva-janmArjitaM dhanam purva-janmArjitaM kanyA agre dhAvati dhAvatiH "Transcendental knowledge, spiritual education, satisfying wealth, and pleasing family members are acquired by a person who has given profuse charity. Whatever good a person does returns to him many fold." In *Manu-nitii*, Manu MahArAja says, *bhAgyaM phalanti sarvatra na cha vidyA na cha paurusham:* "Whatever is predestined by *ViddhAtA*, the fortune-maker, will surely happen. One's so called good education, skill, and enthusiasm will not necessarily guarantee to bring one success." Whatever charity a person gives in the form of education, money, fertile land, and the like is returned to him in a future lifetime. We gain what we have given, when given with a good heart. Indeed, whatever the Lord of destiny, the creator, has written as one's fortune will certainly come to pass. No one attains any wealth without having given in charity in his previous life. Oh best of the brahmins, since we are now poor, in our previous lives neither you nor I must have given any/sufficient charity to worthy persons. Therefore, Oh gracious husband, you should remain here with me. Without you I cannot live even a moment.

"Bereft of her husband, a woman is not welcomed by her father, mother, brother, father-in-law, or any other family members. Everyone will say, "You have lost your husband; you are bad luck/fortune personified!" In this

way I shall be criticised severely!

The Nitii-shastras says, *vinaAshraye na tishthanti paNDitAH vanitA latAH*: "Without proper shelter and support, the following three things cannot survive; a learned man/brahmin, a woman, and a creeper." Therefore the modern women's liberation movement is a total failure. Furthermore, the GaruDa PurANa states, *pati dharma pati sargaH pati hi paramaM tapaH patiri pritim Apanne priiyante sarva devata* "A chaste woman always thinks that pleasing her spiritually situated husband is her heavenly pleasure, utmost duty, and greatest austerity. If her husband is pleased (as *Kulottama*, Vishnu personified), she thinks the Supreme lord and all the demigods are pleased. The Supreme Lord includes all the *devatas* (demigods)." PavitrA continued, 'Please, therefore, stay with me and be satisfied with whatever wealth we get. Whatever is destined, we shall obtain in due course of time and enjoy here in perfect happiness.'

"Hearing these plaintive words from his wife, SumedhA decided to remain in their native village. One day the great sage KauNDinya arrived at their place, and upon seeing him the brahmin SumedhA and his wife stood up before him and then offered him their respectful obeisances. With his head bowed, SumedhA welcomed him: 'We are very fortunate to behold you here today, Oh wisest of sages. My life has become successful, and I am much obliged to you.'

"SumedhA offered KauNDinya Muni a comfortable seat and highly praised his austerities and learning. "Just by having your *darshan* today,' said SumedhA, 'I have become very fortunate.' The poor brahmin couple fed the sage as sumptuously as they could afford to according to their means, and afterwards PavitrA asked the mendicant, 'Oh most learned one, what process can we follow to be relieved of our poverty? How can a person who has not given anything in charity in his previous life get a good family, much wealth, and a fine education in this life? My husband wants to leave me here and go abroad to beg alms, but I have earnestly prayed to him to stay here with me. I humbly told him that if one lacks wealth in the present life, it is because of not having given sufficient charity in previous lifetimes. And so he has consented to remain here. It is only due to my great fortune that you have so mercifully come here today. Now we are certain to see the end of our poverty very soon.'

"Oh best of the brahmanas, please tell us how we can be free of this

perpetual misery brought on by poverty. Oh merciful one, kindly describe some means - a place of pilgrimage we may visit, a day of fasting we may observe, or an austerity we may perform - by which our ill fortune will end forever.'

"Hearing this sincere supplication from the patient lady, the great sage KauNDinya reflected silently for a moment and then said, 'There is a fast day very dear to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Hari. Fasting on this day nullifies all kinds of sins and removes all miseries caused by poverty. This fast day, which occurs during the dark part (*krishna paksha*) of the extra, leap-year month, is known as ParamA EkAdasii. It is the topmost day of Lord Vishnu, hence the name ParamA. This extra month (*Purushottam Mase*), dark fortnight EkAdasii bestows all the necessities of life, such as money and food grains, and at last gives liberation/release. When the evening of this day comes, one should begin singing the glories of the Lord and dancing in ecstasy, and one should continue through the entire night.

"This holy fast was once observed faithfully by Lord Kuvera (the treasurer of the devas). When Lord Shiva saw how strictly he had fasted, Shiva became very pleased and made Kuvera the treasurer of heaven. Also, king Harishchandra fasted on this EkAdasii after his dear wife and son had been sold, and the king was able to get them back. Thereafter he ruled his kingdom with no further impediments. Therefore, Oh broad-eyed lady, you also should observe the sacred fast of ParamA EkAdasii, following all the appropriate rules and regulations and remaining awake all night."

Lord Sri Krishna continued, "Oh Yudhishtira, son of PANDu, in this way KauNDinya Muni mercifully and affectionately instructed PavitrA about the ParamA EkAdasii fast. Then he said to SumedhA, 'On the DvAdasii, the day after EkAdasii, you should vow to observe PaNcharAtriki fasting according to all the rules and regulations. After taking a bath early in the morning, you and your good wife, along with both your parents and hers, should fast for five days according to your ability. Then you will all become eligible to return home, to the abode of Lord Vishnu.

"A person who simply makes use of only one seat during these five days goes to the heavenly planets. Whoever feeds qualified brahmins nicely on these five days has in effect fed all the demigods, all human beings, and even all the demons. Whoever donates a pot of drinking water to a twice

born brahmin during this five-day period will gain merit equal to that gained by donating the entire planet in charity. Anyone who gives a learned person a pot filled with sesame seeds resides in heaven for as many years as there are seeds in the pot. One who donates a pot filled with golden ghee will surely go to the abode of the sun god after fully enjoying the pleasures of this earthly planet. Whoever remains celibate during these five-days will attain celestial happiness and enjoy with the maidens of Indraloka. Therefore both of you - SumedhA and PavitrA - should fast during these five days of PaNcharAtrika in order to be rewarded with ample grains and wealth for the rest of your lives on this planet. The spiritual world will be your abode thereafter.'

"Hearing this sublime advice, the brahmin couple, SumedhA and PavitrA, properly observed the ParamA EkAdasii and the fast of PaNcharAtrika, and very soon thereafter they beheld a handsome prince approaching them from the royal palace. On the orders of Lord BrahmA, the prince gave them a beautiful, exquisitely furnished house and invited them to live in it. Praising their austerity and patience, he also gave them an entire village for their livelihood. Then he returned to the palace. Thus SumedhA and his wife enjoyed all kinds of facilities in this world and at last went to the abode of Lord Vishnu.

"Anyone who observes a fast on ParamA EkAdasii and also the fast of PaNcharAtrika is freed from all his sins, and after enjoying life he returns to Vishnuloka, as did the brahmin SumedhA and his faithful wife, PavitrA. It is impossible, Oh Yudhishtira, to calculate the extent of the merit one obtains by fasting on ParamA EkAdasii, for such an observance is equal to bathing in places of pilgrimage such as Pushkara Lake and the Ganges river, giving cows in charity, and performing all sorts of other religious activities. One who fasts on this day has also completed the offerings of oblations to his forefathers in GayA. He has, in effect, fasted on all other auspicious days.

"As in the social order the brahmin are considered the best, as amongst four-legged creatures the cow is best, and as among demigods Lord Indradev is the best, so among all months the extra month of leap-year is the best. The PaNcharAtrika fast - the fast of five days (panch = five, ratri = nights) in the extra, leap year month - is said to remove all kinds of abominable sins. But the PaNcharAtriki fast, together with the fasts of ParamA and Paramai EkAdasii, destroys all a person's sins. If a person is unable to fast on these days, he should observe the fasts during the extra month according to his

ability. A person who, having received a human birth, does not take a proper bath during this extra month and then observes these EkAdasiis, which are very dear to Lord Hari, commits suicide and suffers in the cycle of 8,400,000 species. The rare human birth is meant for accumulating merit and at last achieving liberating release from this material world. Therefore one should by all means observe fasting on this auspicious ParamA EkAdasii."

Lord Sri Krishna concluded, "Oh sinless Yudhishtira, as you have requested, I have described to you the wonderful merit one can attain by fasting on the EkAdasii named ParamA, which occurs during the dark part of the extra, leap-year month. You should observe this fast if at all possible."

King Yudhishtira did exactly as Lord Krishna had instructed, and so did all his brothers and their wife, Draupadi. After enjoying pleasures rarely achieved in the material world, they returned home, back to Godhead. Whoever, after taking a proper bath, observes a fast on these two extra-month EkAdasiis will go to heaven and finally attain to the abode of Sri Vishnu, and as he travels there he will be praised and prayed to by all the demigods.

Thus ends the narration of the glories of ParamA EkAdasii, the EkAdasii that occurs during the dark fortnight of the extra, leap-year month, from the Skanda PurANa.

22. **PASANKUSHA EKADASI:**

Yudhishtira maharaj said, Oh Madhusudana, what is the name of the EkAdasii that comes during the light fortnight of the month of Ashvina (September - October)? Please be merciful and disclose this truth to me."

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna replied, "Oh king, please listen as I explain the glories of this EkAdasii - PApankusha EkAdasii - which removes all sins. On this day one should worship the Deity of Padmanabha, the lotus naveled Lord Vishnu, according to the rules of archana vidhi (regulations). By so doing, one achieves whatever heavenly pleasures one may want in this world, and at last attains liberation from this world thereafter. Simply by offering one's humble obeisances unto Lord Vishnu, the rider of GaruDa, one can achieve the same merit as is gained by performing great penances for a long time restraining and controlling the senses. Although a person might have committed unlimited and abominable

sins, he can still escape hellish punishment just by paying his obeisances to Lord Sri Hari, the taker away of all sin."

"The merits gained by going on pilgrimage to the Holy Tirthas of this earthly planet can also be achieved simply by chanting the Holy names of Lord Vishnu. Whosoever chants these sacred names - such as RAma, Vishnu, Janardana or Krishna - especially on EkAdasii, never sees YamarAj, the king of death's punishing abode. Nor does such a devotee who fasts on PApankusha EkAdasii, which is very dear to Me, see that plutonic abode."

"Both the Vaishnava who criticizes Lord Shiva and the Shaivite (Saivite) who criticizes Me certainly go to hell. The merit obtained by performing one hundred horse sacrifices and one hundred Rajasurya sacrifices is not even equal to one sixteenth of the merit a devotee is able to attain by fasting on EkAdasii. There is no higher merit one can achieve than that attained by fasting on EkAdasii. Indeed, nothing in all the three worlds is as pleasing or as able to purify one of accumulated sin as EkAdasii, the day of the lotus-aveled Lord, Padmanabha.

"O king, until a person observes a fast on the day of Lord Padmanabha named PApANkusha EkAdasii, he remains sinful, and the reactions of his past sinful activities never leave him like a chaste wife. There is no merit in all the three worlds that can match the merit that one gains by observing a fast on this EkAdasii. Whosoever observes it faithfully never has to see death personified, Lord YamarAj. One who desires liberation, elevation to the heavens, good health, beautiful women, wealth, and food grains should simply fast on this PAshunkushA EkAdasii. O king, neither the Ganges, Gaya, Kashi, nor Pushkara, nor even the Holy site of Kurukshetra, can grant as much auspicious merit as this PApankusha EkAdasii.

"O MaharAj Yudhishthira, protector of the earth, after observing ekadasi during the daytime, the devotee should remain awake through the night, absorbed in hearing, chanting and serving the lord - for by so doing he easily attains to the Supreme abode of Lord Vishnu. Not only that, but ten generations of ancestors on his mother's side, ten generations on his father's side, and ten generations on his wife's side are all liberated by a single observance of a fast on this EkAdasii. All these ancestors attain their original, four armed transcendental Vaikuntha forms. Wearing yellow garments and beautiful garlands, they ride to the spiritual realm on the back of GaruDa, the renown great enemy of the snakes. This is the benediction

My devotee earns simply by observing one PApANkusha EkAdasii properly.

"O best of kings, whether one is a child, a youth, or in old age, fasting on PApankusha EkAdasii frees him from all sins and makes him immune to suffering a hellish rebirth. Whosoever observes a fast on the PApankusha EkAdasii becomes free of all his sins and returns to the spiritual abode of Lord Sri Hari. Whosoever donates gold, sesame seeds, fertile land, cows, grain, drinking water, an umbrella, or a pair of shoes on this most auspicious of Holy days will never have to visit the abode of YamarAj, who always punishes the sinners. But if a resident of earth fails to perform spiritual deeds, especially the observance of a fast on days such as EkAdasii, his breathing is said to be no better, or of as much use as the breathing/puffing of a blacksmith's bellows.

"O best of the kings, especially on this PApANkusha EkAdasii, even the poor should first bathe and then give some charity according to their means, and perform other auspicious activities in accordance with their ability.

"Whosoever performs sacrifices and benefits the people, or builds public ponds, resting places, gardens, or houses does not suffer the punishments of YamarAj. Indeed, one should understand that a person much have performed such pious activities as these in the past life if he is long lived, wealthy, of high birth, or free from all diseases. But a person who observes PApANkusha EkAdasii goes to the abode of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vishnu.)

Lord Sri Krishna then concluded, "Thus, Oh saintly Yudhishtira, I have narrated to you the glories of the auspicious PApANkusha EkAdasii."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of the PApANkusha EkAdasii, or Ashwina-shukla EkAdasii, from the Brahma-vaivarta PurANa.

23. **RAMA EKADASI:**

Yudhishtira Maharaj said, "O Janardana, O protector of all beings, what is the name of the Ekadasi that comes during the dark fortnight (Krishna paksha) of the month of Karttika (October - November)? Please impart this sacred knowledge to me.

The Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna then spoke as follows, "O lion among kings, please listen as I narrate to you. The Ekadasi that occurs during the dark part of the month of Karttika is called Ramaa Ekadasi. It is most auspicious, for it at once eradicates the greatest sins and awards one the passage to the spiritual abode. I shall now narrate to you its history and glories.

"There once lived a famous king of the name Muchakunda, who was friendly to Lord Indra, the king of the heavenly planets, as well as with Yamaraj, Varuna, and Vibhishana, the pious brother of the demon Ravana. Muchakunda always spoke the truth and constantly rendered devotional service to Me. Because he ruled according to religious principles, there were no disturbances in his kingdom.

"Muchakunda's daughter was named Chandrabhaagaa, after a sacred river, and the king gave her in marriage to Shobhana, the son of Chandrasena. One day, Shobhana visited his father-in-law's palace on the auspicious Ekadasi day. This visit made Shobhana's wife Chandrabhaagaa quite anxious, for she knew that her husband was physically very weak and unable to bear the austerity of a day-long fast. She said to him, 'My father is very strict about following Ekadasi. On Dasami, the day before Ekadasi, he strikes a large kettledrum and announces, "Nobody should eat on Ekadasi, the sacred day of Sri Hari!

"When Shobhana heard the sound of the kettledrum, he said to his wife, 'O beautiful one, what am I to do now? Please tell me how I can save my life and obey your father's strictness and at the same time satisfy our guests!

"Chandrabhaagaa then spoke, 'My dear husband, in my father's house nobody - not even the elephants or horses, what to speak of consenting human beings - eats on Ekadasi. Indeed, none of the animals are given their ration of grains, leaves, or straw - or even water ! - on Ekadasi, the sacred day of Sri Hari. So how can you escape fasting? My beloved husband, if you must eat something, then you should leave here at once. Now, with firm conviction decide on what you have to do.'

"Prince Shobhana then said, 'I have decided to fast on the sacred Ekadasi day. Whatever my fate is, it will surely come to pass.'

"Deciding thus, Shobhana attempted to fast on this Ekadasi, but he became unbearably disturbed with excessive hunger and thirst. Eventually the sun set in the west, and the arrival of the auspicious night made all the Vaishnavas

very happy. O Yudhisthira, all the devotees enjoyed worshipping Me (Sri Hari) and remaining awake all through night, but Prince Shobhana that night became absolutely unbearable. Indeed, when the Sun rose on the Dwadasi, that Prince Shobhana was dead.

"King Muchakunda observed his son-in-law's funeral, ordering a large stack of wood be assembled for the fire, but he instructed his daughter Chandrabhaagaa not to join her husband on the funeral pyre. Thus Chandrabhaagaa, after performing all the purificatory processes and procedures for honouring her deceased husband, continued to live in her father's house.

Lord Sri Krishna continued, "O best of the kings, Yudhisthira, even though Shobhana died because of observing Ramaa Ekadasi, the merit that he accrued enabled him, after his death, to become the ruler of a kingdom high on the peak of Mandarachala Mountain. This kingdom was like a city of the demigods; very lustrous, with unlimited jewels set in the walls of its buildings that gave off light. The pillars were made of rubies, and gold inlaid with diamonds shone everywhere. As King Shobhana sat upon a throne beneath a pure white canopy, servants fanned him with yak-tail whisks. A stunning crown rested upon his head, beautiful earrings adorned his ears, a necklace graced his throat, and bejewelled armlets and bracelets encircled his arms. He was served by Gandharvas (the best of heavenly singers) and Apsaras (celestial dancers). Verily, he resembled a second Indra.

"One day, a brahmin named Somasharma, who lived in Muchakunda's kingdom, happened upon Shobhana's kingdom while travelling to various places of pilgrimage. The brahmin saw Shobhana in all his resplendent glory and thought he might be the son-in-law of his own king Muchakunda. When Shobhana saw the brahmin approaching, he immediately rose up from his seat and welcomed him. After Shobhana had paid his respectful obeisances he asked the brahmin about his well-being and about the health and welfare of his (Shobhana's) father-in-law, his wife and all the residents of the city.

"Somasharma then said, `O king, all the residents and subjects are well in your father-in-law's kingdom, and Chandrabhaagaa and your other family members are also quite well. Peace and prosperity reign throughout the kingdom. But there is one thing, I'm quite astonished to find you here!

Please tell me about yourself. Nobody has ever seen such a beautiful city as this! Kindly tell me how you obtained it.'

"King Shobhana then began to tell his story, 'Because I observed the Ramaa Ekadasi, I was given this splendid city to rule over. But for all of its grandeur, it is only temporary. I beg you to do something to correct this deficiency. You see, this is only an ephemeral city, a place of this material world. How may I make its beauties and glories permanent? Kindly reveal this to me by your instructions.

"The brahmin then asked, 'Why is this kingdom unstable and how will it become stable? Please fully explain this to me, and I shall try to help you.'

"Shobhana then answered, 'Because I fasted on the Ramaa Ekadasi without any faith, this kingdom is impermanent. Now hear how it can become permanent. Please return to Chandrabhaagaa, the beautiful daughter of king Muchukunda, and tell her what you have seen and understood about this place and about me. Surely, if you, a pure hearted brahmin, tell her this, my city will soon become permanent.'

"Thus the brahmin returned to his city and related the entire episode to Chandrabhaagaa, who was both surprised and overjoyed to hear this news of her husband. She said, 'O brahmana, is this a dream you have seen, or is it actually a factual thing?'

"Somasharma the brahmin replied, 'O Princess, I have seen your late husband face to face in that wonderful kingdom, which resembles a realm of the denizens' of heavens playgrounds. But you former husband has asked me to relate to you that he says that his kingdom is unstable and could vanish into thin air at any moment. Therefore he hope you can find a way to make it permanent.'

"Chandrabhaagaa then said, 'O sage among the brahmins, please take me to that place where my husband resides at once, for I greatly desire to see him again! Surely I shall make his kingdom permanent with the merit that I have acquired by fasting on every Ekadasi throughout my life. Please reunite us at once, again. It is said that one who reunites separated persons also obtains very great merit.'

"The humble brahmin Somasharma then led Chandrabhaagaa to Shobhana's effulgent kingdom. Before reaching it, however, they stopped at the foot of

Mt. Mandaracala, at the sacred ashrama of Vamadeva. Upon hearing their story, Vamadeva chanted hymns from the Vedas and sprinkled holy water from his samanya arghya upon Chandrabhaagaa. By the influence of that great Rishi's rites, the merit she had accrued by fasting for so many Ekadasis made her body transcendental. Ecstatic, her eyes beaming in wonder, Chandrabhaagaa continued on her journey.

"When Shobhana saw his wife approaching him high on Mount Mandarachala, he was overwhelmed with joy and called out to her in great happiness and jubilation. After she arrived, he seated her on his left side and she said to him, 'O dearest Patiguru, please listen as I tell you something that will benefit you greatly. Since I was eight years old I have fasted regularly and with full faith on every Ekadasi. If I transfer to you all the merit I have accumulated, your kingdom will surely become permanent, and its prosperity will grow and grow until the coming of the great inundation!'

Lord Sri Krishna then continued to address Yudhisthira as follows, "O Yudhisthira, in this way Chandrabhaagaa who was beautifully decorated with the finest ornaments and had an exquisitely transcendental body, at last enjoyed peace and happiness with her husband. By the potency of Ramaa Ekadasi, Shobhana found his kingdom on the peaks of Mt. Mandarachala able to fulfill all his desires and bestow upon him everlasting happiness, like that achieved from the transcendental Kaama-dhenu milch cow.

"O greatest of kings, I have thus narrated to you the glories of Ramaa Ekadasi that falls in the dark fortnight of the month of Kartika.

"Anyone who observes sacred Ekadasi during both the light and the dark fortnight of each month is undoubtedly freed from the reactions to the sin of killing a brahmin. One should not differentiate between the Ekadasis of the light and dark parts of the month. As we have seen, both can award pleasure in this world and liberate even the most sinful and fallen souls. Just as black cows and white cows give equally good quality milk. So the Ekadasis of the dark fortnight (Krishna paksha) and the light fortnight (shukla or Gaura paksha) award the same high degree of merit and eventually liberate one from the repeated cycle of birth and death. Anyone who simply hears this narration of the glories of the sacred day of Ramaa Ekadasi, is freed from all kinds of sin and attains the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu.

Thus ends the narration for the glories of the sacred Karttika-krishna Ekadasi, or Ramaa Ekadasi, from the Brahma-Vaivarta Purana of Srila Krishna Dwaipayana Veda Vyaasa.

24. UTTHANA EKADASI:

It has four names: Haribodhini - Prabodhini - DevotthAni - Utthana EkAdasii and it is the second Ekadasi (Kartik Shukla, light fortnight) in the month of Kartik.

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 pervious 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 criticises 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 brahmana 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 brahmana who enjoys sex with a widow or a brahmana lady married to another man brings ruin to himself and his family. Any brahmana 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 brahmana 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 rascal 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 of 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 brahmana is freed of all stains on his character by faster 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 honours 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 honour 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 brahmana. 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, I 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 brahma-muhurta 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 honour 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 ten thousand births.

"One who merely sees Tulasi Maharani, touches her, meditates 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 brahmana, and if the devotee has neglected some rules and regulation of spiritual life, he should confess them before brahmana 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 brahmana the next day. That is very pleasing to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

"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 brahmana. Honey and yoghurt are also proper gifts for a brahmana. 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 brahmana couple with sumptuous food. A man who wants to prevent

baldness should donate a mirror to a brahmana, one who has second-hand shoes should donate shoes, and one who has fasted from salt should donate some sugar to a brahmana. 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 brahmana 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 brahmana some sweet words. One who does so will surely attain the full benefit of fasting on Ekadasi.

"After offering his obeisances 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 brahmana."

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

From

Hari-Bhakti-Vilas:

PRABODHINIM UPOSYA EVA NA GARBHE VISATE NARAH
SARVA DHARMAN PARITYAJYA TASMAT KURVITA NARADA

(HARI BHAKTI VILASA 16/289 from SKANDA PURANA spoken by
Lord Brahma)

Oh Narada Muni, one who fasts on Prabodhini (when the Lord gets up) Ekadasi, does not enter again into the womb of another mother. Therefore, a person should give up all varieties of occupation and fast on this particular Ekadasi day.

DUGDHABDHIH BHOGI SAYANE BHAGAVAN ANANTO YASMIN
DINE SVAPITI CA ATHA VIBHUDHYATE CA TASMINN ANANYA
MANASAM UPAVASA BHAJAM KAMAM DADATY ABHIMATAM
GARUDANKA SAYI

(HARI BHAKTI VILASA 16/293 from PADMA PURANA)

One who fasts with one pointed intelligence on the day when the Supreme Lord Sri Hari, Who sleeps on a bed of the enemy of Garuda (snake) goes to take rest in the Milk ocean on the bed of Ananta Sesa and also the day He gets up, gets all of his desires fulfilled.

BHAKTIPRADA HAREH SATU NAMNA KSATA PRAVODHINI YASA
VISNOH PARA MURTIR AVYAKTA ANEKA RUPINI SA KSIPTA
MANUSE LOKE DVADADI MUNI PUNGAVA

(HARI BHAKTI VILASA 16/301 from VARAHA PURANA conversation between Yamaraja and Narada Muni)

This Prabodhini Ekadasi is famous for rewarding devotion to Lord Sri Hari. Oh best of the sages (Narada Muni), the personality of Ekadasi is present on this earthly planet in an unmanifested form of Lord Hari.

Srila Sanatana Gosvami remarks in his Digdarsini-tika that one who exactly observes the Ekadasi fast by observing this, he directly worships Lord Sri Hari. This is the meaning of this verse. Therefore, Ekadasi is said to be equal to Lord Sri Hari Himself.

CATUR DHA GRAHYA VAI CIRNAM CATUR MASYA VRATAM
NARAH KARTIKE SUKLAPAKSE TU DVADASYAM TAT
SAMACARET

(HARI BHAKTI VILASA 16/412 from MAHABHARATA)

A person who observed Caturmasya fast stated in four different ways should end his fast on the Dvadasi day on the light fortnight of the month of Karttika.(Ofcourse in ISKCON we do Caturmasya & Kartika-vrata from Purnima to Purnima.)

EKADASYAM PARER DATTAM DIPAM PRAJVALYA MUSIKA

MANUSYAM DURLABHAM PRAPYA PARAM GATIM AVAPA SA

(HARI BHAKTI VILASA 16/129 from SKANDA PURANA)

One rat (female mouse) had once burnt a ghee lamp which was offered by someone else on Ekadasi day. By doing so, she achieved a rarely achievable human form and at last attained the topmost destination.

Srila Sanatana Gosvami writes in his Digdarsini-tika, "In this verse it is found that it is possible to attain the results of directly offering a lamp on Ekadasi. This history of the mouse is very famous in the Padma Purana, Kartika Mahatmya. (In a temple of Lord Visnu, there was a mouse living who was eating the ghee from the extinguished ghee lamps which had been offered by others to Him. One day when she felt hungry to eat ghee, she tried to eat the ghee from a lamp which was not yet extinguished. While eating ghee from the lamp, the cotton wick got stuck in her teeth. Since the ghee wick had a flame, the mouse started jumping in front of the Lord's Deity form and thus died due to fire. But Lord Sri Visnu accepted the jumping of that mouse with a lit ghee wick in her mouth as His aratik. In the end He gave her liberation, the topmost destination.)

Glories of Remaining Awake on the night of Prabodhini Ekadasi: (Padma Purana, Kartika Mahatmya)

The sins accumulated in thousands of previous births burn like a mass of cotton for someone who remains awake during Prabodhani-ekadasi. Even if guilty of the most heinous sins, such as killing a brahmana, O sage a person shakes away his sins by remaining awake in Visnu's honour throughout Prabodhani-ekadasi. All his mental, vocal, and physical sins will be washed away by Sri Govinda.(388-390)

Results that are difficult to obtain even with great yajnas, such as Asvamedha, effortlessly accrue to those who remain awake during Prabodhani-ekadasi.(391)

The Lord should be taken out on a grand Ratha-yatra festival on this day after awakening Him from His sleep for the four months of Caturmasya i.e from Sayani Ekadasi when the Lord had taken rest on the Milk Ocean. This festival has been elaborately described in the Padma Purana.

25. UTPANNA EKADASI:

Suta Goswami said, "O learned brahmanas, long ago Lord Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, explained the auspicious glories of Sri Ekadasi and the rules and regulations governing each observance of fasting on that holy day. O best of the brahmins, whosoever hears about the origins and glories of these sacred fasts on the Ekadasi days goes directly to the abode of Lord Vishnu after enjoying many different kinds of happiness in this material world.

"Arjuna, the son of Prithaa, asked the Lord, 'O Janardana, what are the pious benefits of complete fasting, eating only supper, or eating but once at midday on Ekadasi, and what are the regulations for observing the various Ekadasi days? Kindly narrate all this to me'.

"The Supreme Lord Krishna replied, 'O Arjuna, in the beginning of winter (northern hemisphere), on the Ekadasi that occurs during the dark fortnight of the month of Margasirsha (November-December), a novice should begin his practice of observing a fast on Ekadasi. On Dasami, the day before Ekadasi, he should clean his teeth nicely. Then during the eight portion of Dasami, just as the Sun is about to set, he should eat supper.

"The next morning the devotee should make a vow, according to the rules and regulations, to observe fasting. At midday he should bathe properly in a river, lake or small pond. A bath in a river is most purifying, that taken in a lake is less so, and a bath in a small pond is the least purifying. If neither a river, lake nor pond is accessible, he may bathe with well-water.

"The devotee should chant this prayer containing the names of Mother Earth: "O Asvakrante! O Rathakrante! O Vishnukrante! O Vasundhare! O Mrttike! O Mother Earth! Kindly remove all the sins I have accumulated throughout my many past lives so that I may enter the sacred abode of the Supreme Lord." As the devotee chants, he should smear mud over his body.

"During the day of fasting the devotee should not speak to those who are fallen from their religious duties, to dog-eaters, to thieves, or to hypocrites. He should also avoid speaking with slanderers; with those who abuse the demigods, the Vedic literatures, or brahmanas; or with any other wicked personalities, such as those who have sex with forbidden women, those who are known plunderers, or those who rob temples. If any such person is

spoken to or even seen during Ekadasi, one must purify oneself by looking directly at the sun.

"Then the devotee should respectfully worship Lord Govinda with first-class food, flowers, and so forth. In his home he should offer the Lord a lamp in pure devotional consciousness. he should also avoid sleeping during the daytime and should completely abstain from sex. Fasting from all food and water, he should joyfully sing the Lord's glories and play musical instruments for His pleasure throughout the night. After remaining awake all night in pure consciousness, the worshipper should give charity to qualified brahmanas and offer his humble obeisances unto them, begging their forgiveness for his offences.

"Those who are serious about devotional service should consider the Ekadasis that occur during dark fortnights to be as good as those that occur during bright fortnights. O king, one should never discriminate between these two kinds of Ekadasi.

Please listen as I now describe the results obtained by one who observes Ekadasi in this way. Neither the merit one receives by taking a bath in the sacred place of pilgrimage known as Sankhoddhara, where the Lord killed the Sankhasura demon, nor the merit one receives upon seeing Lord Gadadhara directly is equal to one sixteenth of the merit one obtains by fasting on Ekadasi. It is said that by giving charity on a Monday when the moon is full, one obtains a hundred thousand times the results of ordinary charity. O winner of wealth, one who gives charity on the day of the sankranti (equinox) attains four hundred thousand times the ordinary result. Yet simply by fasting on Ekadasi one obtains all these pious results, as well as whatever pious results one gets at Kurukshetra during an eclipse of the sun or moon. Furthermore, the faithful soul who observes complete fasting on Ekadasi achieves a hundred times more merit than one who performs an Asvamedha-yajna (horse sacrifice). One who observes Ekadasi just once earns ten times more merit than a person who gives a thousand cows in charity to a brahmana learned in the Vedas.

"A person who feeds just one brahmacari earns ten times more merit than one who feeds ten good brahmanas in his own house. But a thousand times more merit than is earned by feeding a brahmacari is achieved by donating land to the needy and respectable brahmana, and a thousand time more than that is earned by giving away a virgin girl in marriage to a young, well-

educated, responsible man. Ten times more beneficial than this is educating children properly on the spiritual path, without expecting any reward in return. Ten times better than this, however, is giving food grains to the hungry. Indeed, giving charity to those in need is the best of all, and there never has been or ever will be a better charity than this. O son of Kunti, all the forefathers and demigods in heaven become very satisfied when one gives food grains in charity. But the merit one obtains by observing a complete fast on Ekadasi cannot be measured. O Arjuna, best of all Kurus, the powerful effect of this merit is inconceivable even to the demigods, and half this merit is attained by one who eats only supper on Ekadasi.

"One should therefore observe fasting on Lord Hari's day either by eating only once at midday, abstaining from grains and beans; or by fasting completely. The processes of staying in places of pilgrimage, giving charity, and performing fire sacrifices may boast only as long as Ekadasi has not arrived. Therefore anyone afraid of the miseries of material existence should observe Ekadasi. On Ekadasi one should not drink water from a conch-shell, kill living entities such as fish or pigs, or eat any grains or beans. Thus I have described to you, O Arjuna, the best of all methods of fasting, as you have inquired from Me.'

"Arjuna then asked, 'O Lord, according to You, a thousand Vedic sacrifices do not equal even one Ekadasi fast. How can this be? How has Ekadasi become the most meritorious of all days?'

"Lord Sri Krishan replied, 'I will tell you why Ekadasi is the most purifying of all days. In the Satya-Yuga there once lived an amazingly fearsome demon called Mura. Always very angry, he terrified all the demigods, defeating even Indra, the king of heaven; Vivasvan, the sun-god; the eight Vasus; Lord Brahma; Vayu, the wind-god; and Agni, the fire-god. With his terrible power he brought them all under his control.

"Lord Indra then approached Lord Shiva and said, "We have all fallen from our planets and are now wandering helplessly on the earth. O lord, how can we find relief from this affliction? What will be the fate of us demigods?'

"Lord Shiva replied, "O best of the demigods, go to that place where Lord Vishnu, the rider of Garuda, resides. He is Jagannatha, the master of all the universes and their shelter as well. He is devoted to protecting all souls surrendered to Him."

"Lord Krishna continued, 'O Arjuna, winner of wealth, after Lord Indra heard these words of Lord Shiva's, he proceeded with all the demigods to the place where Lord Jagannatha, the Lord of the universe, the protector of all souls, was resting. Seeing the Lord sleeping upon the water, the demigods joined their palms and, led by Indra, recite the following prayers:

""O Supreme Personality of Godhead, all obeisances to You. O Lord of lords, O You who are praised by the foremost demigods, O enemy of all demons, O lotus-eyed Lord, O Madhusudana (killer of the Madhu demon), please protect us. Afraid of the demon Mura, we demigods have come to take shelter of You. O Jagannatha, You are the doer of everything and the creator of everything. You are the mother and the father of all universes. You are the creator, the maintainer, and the destroyer of all. You are the supreme helper of all the demigods, and You alone can bring peace to them. you alone are the earth, the sky, and the universal benefactor.

""You are Shiva, Brahma, and also Vishnu, the maintainer of the three worlds. You are the gods of the sun, moon, and fire. You are the clarified butter, the oblation, the sacred fire, the mantras, the rituals, the priests, and the silent chanting of japa. You are the sacrifice itself, its sponsor, and the enjoyer of its results, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Nothing within these three worlds, whether moveable or immovable, can exist independent of You. O Supreme Lord, Lord of lords, You are the protector of those who take shelter of You. O supreme mystic, O shelter of the fearful, please rescue and protect us. We demigods have been defeated by the demons and have thus fallen from the heavenly realm. Deprived of our positions, O Lord of the universe, we are now wandering about this earthly planet."

"Lord Krishna continued, 'Having heard Indra and the other demigods speak these words, Sri Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, replied, "What demon possesses such great powers of delusion that he has been able to defeat all the demigods? What is his name, and where does he live? Where does he get his strength and shelter? Tell Me everything, O Indra, and do not fear."

"Lord Indra replied, "O Supreme Godhead, O Lord of lords, O You who vanquish the fear in Your pure devotees' hearts, O You who are so kind to your faithful servants, there was once a powerful demon of the Brahma dynasty whose name was Nadijangha. he was extraordinarily fearsome and

wholly dedicated to destroying the demigods, and he begot an infamous son named Mura.

""Mura's great capital city is Chandravati. From that base the terribly evil and powerful Mura demon has conquered the whole world and brought all the demigods under his control, driving them out of their heavenly kingdom. He has assumed the roles of Indra, the king of heaven; Agni, the fire-god; Yama, the lord of death; Vayu, the wind-god; Isha, or Lord Shiva; Soma, the moon-god; Nairrti, the lord of the directions; and Pasi, or Varuna, the water-god. He has also begun emanating light in the role of the sun-god and has turned himself into the clouds as well. It is impossible for the demigods to defeat him. O Lord Vishnu, please kill tis demon and make the demigods victorious."

"Hearing these words from Indra, Lord Janardana became very angry and said,

"O powerful demigods, all together you may now advance on Mura's capital city of Chandravati." Encouraged thus, the assembled demigods proceeded to Chandravati with Lord Hari leading the way.

"When Mura saw the demigods, that foremost of demons started roaring very loudly in the company of countless thousands of other demons, who were all holding brilliantly shining weapons. The mighty-armed demons struck the demigods, who began abandoning the battlefield and fleeing in the ten directions. Seeing the Supreme Lord Hrsikesha, the master of the senses, present on the battlefield, the furious demons rushed toward Him with various weapons in their hands. As they charged the Lord, who holds a sword, disk, and club, He immediately pierced all their limbs with His sharp, poisonous arrows. thus many hundred of demons died by the Lord's hand.

"At last the chief demon, Mura, began fighting with the Lord. Mura used his mystic power to render useless whatever weapons the Supreme Lord Hrsikesa unleashed. Indeed, to the demon the weapons felt just like flowers striking him. When the Lord could not defeat the demon even with various kinds of weapons - whether those that are thrown or those that are held - He began fighting with His bare hands, which were as strong as iron-studded clubs. the Lord wrestled with Mura for one thousand celestial years and then, apparently fatigued, left for Badarikashrama. There Lord Yogeshvara, the greatest of all yogis, the Lord of the universe, entered a very beautiful

cave named Himavati to rest. O Dhananjaya, winner of wealth, that cave was ninety-six miles in diameter and had only one entrance. I went there out of fear, and also to sleep. There is no doubt about this, O son of Pandu, for the great fight made me very tired. The demon followed Me into that cave and, seeing Me asleep, started thinking within his heart, "Today I will kill this slayer of all demons, Hari."

"While the wicked-minded Mura was making plans in this way, from My body there manifested a young girl who had a very bright complexion. O son of Pandu, Mura saw that she was equipped with various brilliant weapons and was ready to fight. Challenged by that female to do battle, Mura prepared himself and then fought with her, but he became very astonished when he saw that she fought him without cessation. The king of the demons then said, "Who has created this angry, fearsome girl who is fighting me so powerfully, just like a thunderbolt falling upon me?" After saying this, the demon continued to fight with the girl.

"Suddenly that effulgent goddess shattered all of Mura's weapons and in a moment deprived him of his chariot. He ran toward her to attack with his bare hands, but when she saw him coming she angrily cut off his head. Thus the demon at once fell to the ground and went to the abode of Yamaraja. The rest of the Lord's enemies, out of fear and helplessness, entered the subterranean Patala region.

"Then the Supreme Lord woke up and saw the dead demon before Him, as well as the maiden bowing down to him with joined palms. His face expressing His astonishment, the Lord of the universe said, "Who has killed this vicious demon? He easily defeated all the demigods, Gandharvas, and even Indra himself, along with Indra's companions, the Maruts, and he also defeated the Nagas (snakes), the rulers of the lower planets. He even defeated Me, making Me hide in this cave out of fear. Who is it that has so mercifully protected Me after I ran from the battlefield and went to sleep in this cave?"

"The maiden said, "It is I who have killed this demon after appearing from Your transcendental body. Indeed, O Lord Hari, when he saw You sleeping he wanted to kill You. Understanding the intention of this thorn in the side of the three worlds, I killed the evil rascal and this freed all the demigods from fear. I am Your great maha-sakti, Your internal potency, who strikes fear into the hearts of all Your enemies. I have killed this universally

terrifying demon to protect the three worlds. Please tell me why You are surprised to see that this demon has been killed, O Lord."

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead said, "O sinless one, I am very satisfied to see that it is you who have killed this king of the demons. In this way you have made the demigods happy, prosperous, and full of bliss. Because you have given pleasure to all the demigods in the three worlds, I am very pleased with you. Ask any boon you may desire, O auspicious one. I will give it to you without a doubt, though it be very rare among the demigods."

"The maiden said, "O Lord, if You are pleased with me and wish to give me a boon, then give me the power to deliver from the greatest sins that person who fasts of this day. I wish that half the pious credit obtained by one who fasts will accrue to one who eats only in the evening (abstaining from grains and beans), and that half of this pious credit will be earned by one who eats only at midday. Also, may one who strictly observes a complete fast on my appearance day, with controlled senses, go to the abode of Lord Vishnu for one billion kalpas after he has enjoyed all kinds of pleasures in this world. This is the boon I desire to attain by Your mercy, my Lord, O Lord Janardana, whether a person observes complete fasting, eats only in the evening, or eats only at midday, please grant him a religious attitude, wealth, and at last liberation."

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead said, "O most auspicious lady, what you have requested is granted. All My devotees in this world will surely fast on your day, and thus they will become famous throughout the three worlds and finally come and stay with me in My abode. Because you, My transcendental potency, have appeared on the eleventh day of the waning moon, let your name be Ekadasi. If a person fasts on Ekadasi, I will burn up all his sins and bestow upon him My transcendental abode."

"These are the days of the waxing and waning moon that are most dear to Me: Tritiya (the third day), Ashthami (the eighth day), Navami (the ninth day), Chaturdasi (the fourteenth day), and especially Ekadasi (the eleventh day).

"The merit one attains by fasting on Ekadasi is greater than that achieved by observing any other kind of fast or by going to a place of pilgrimage, and even greater than that achieved by giving charity to brahmanas. I tell you

most emphatically that this is true."

"Having thus given the maiden His benediction, the Supreme Lord suddenly disappeared. From that time onward the Ekadasi day became most meritorious and famous all over the universe. O Arjuna, if a person strictly observes Ekadasi, I kill all his enemies and grant him the highest destination. Indeed, if a person observes this great Ekadasi fast in any of the prescribed way, I remove all obstacles to his spiritual progress and grant him the perfection of life.

"Thus, O son of Prtha, I have described to you the origin of Ekadasi. This one day removes all sins eternally. Indeed, it is the most meritorious day for destroying all kinds of sins, and it has appeared in order to benefit everyone in the universe by bestowing all varieties of perfection.

"One should not discriminate between the Ekadasis of the waxing and waning moons; both must be observed, O Partha, and they should not be differentiated from Maha-Dvadasi. Everyone who fasts of Ekadasi should recognise that there is no difference between these two Ekadasis, for they comprise the same tithi.

"Whoever completely fasts on Ekadasi, following the rules and regulations, will achieve the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu, who rides upon Garuda. They are glorious who devote themselves to Lord Vishnu and spend all their rime studying the glories of Ekadasi. One who vows not to eat anything on Ekadasi but to eat only on the next day achieves the same merit as one who executes a horse sacrifice. Of this there is no doubt.

"On Dvadasi, the day after Ekadasi, one should pray, "O Pundarikaksha, O lotus-eyed Lord, now I will eat. Please shelter me." After saying this, the wise devotee should offer some flowers and water at the Lord's lotus feet and invite the Lord to eat by chanting the eight-syllable mantra thrice. If the devotee wants to gain the fruit of his fast, he should then drink water taken form the sanctified vessel in which he offered water at the Lord's lotus feet.

"On Dvadasi one must avoid sleeping during the day, eating in another's home, eating more than once, having sex, eating honey, eating from a bell-metal plate, eating urad-dal, and rubbing oil on one's body. The devotee must give up these eight things on Dvadasi. If he wants to speak to an outcaste on that day, he must purify himself by eating a Tulasi leaf or an

amalaki fruit. O best of kings, from noon on Ekadasi until dawn on Dvadasi, one should engage himself in taking baths, worshipping the Lord, and executing devotional activities, including the giving of charity and the performance of fire sacrifices. If one finds himself in difficult circumstances and cannot break the Ekadasi fast properly on Dvadasi, one can break it by drinking water, and then one is not at fault if he eats again after that.

"A devotee of Lord Vishnu who day and night hears these all-auspicious topics concerning the Lord from the mouth of another devotee will be elevated to the Lord's planet and reside there for ten million kalpas. And one who hears even one sentence about the glories of Ekadasi is freed from the reactions to such sins as killing a brahmana. There is no doubt of this. For all eternity there will be no better way of worshipping Lord Vishnu than observing a fast on Ekadasi."

Thus ends the narration of the glories of Margasirsa-krishna Ekadasi, or Utpanna Ekadasi, from the Bhavisya-uttara Purana.

26. MOKSHADA EKADASI:

Mokshada Ekadasi is a very special Ekadasi in two regards; today was the all auspicious day on which Lord Sri Krishna spoke the Srimad Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, at the place now known as Jyotisha tirtha.

Anyone who gifts a Bhagavad Gita away to a deserving person on this day is bestowed profuse blessings by the Sri Krishna Bhagavan.

The Ancient History of Mokshada Ekadasi from Brahmanda Purana:

Yudhishthira Maharaj said, "O Vishnu, master of all, O delight of the three worlds, O Lord of the entire Universe, O creator of the world, O oldest personality, O best of all beings, I offer my most respectful obeisances unto You.

"O Lord of lords, for the benefit of all living entities, kindly answer some questions that I have. What is the name of the Ekadasi that occurs during the light fortnight of the month of Margashirsha (November-December) and

removes all sins? How does one observe it properly, and which Deity is worshipped on that holiest of days? O my Lord please explain this to me in full."

Lord Sri Krishna replied, "O dear Yudhishtira, your enquiry is very auspicious in itself and will bring you fame. Just as I previously explained to you about the dearest Utpannaa Maha-Dwadasi - which occurs during the dark part of the month of Margashirsha, which is the day when Ekadasi-devi appeared from My body to kill the demon Mura, and which benefits everything animate and inanimate in the three worlds - so I shall now relate to you regarding this Ekadasi that occurs during the light part of the month of Margashirsha. This Ekadasi is famous as Mokshadaa because it purifies the faithful devotee of all sinful reactions and bestows liberation upon him. The worshippable Deity of this all auspicious day is Lord Damodara. With full attention one should worship Him with incense, a ghee lamp, fragrant flowers, and Tulasi manjaris (buds).

"O best of saintly kings, please listen as I narrate to you the ancient and auspicious history of this wonderful Ekadasi. Simply by hearing this history one can attain the merit earned by performing a horse sacrifice. By the influence of this merit, one's forefathers, mothers, sons, and other relatives who have gone to hell can turn around and go to the heavenly kingdom. For this reason alone, O king, you should listen with rapt attention to this narration. "There once was a beautiful city named Champaka-nagar, which was decorated with devoted Vaishnavas. There the best of saintly kings Maharaj Vaikhaanasa, ruled over his subjects as if they were his very own dear sons and daughters. The brahmins in that capital city were all expert in four kinds of Vedic knowledge. The king, while ruling properly, had a dream one night in which his father was seen to be suffering the pangs of hellish torture in one of the hellish planets ruled over by the Yamaraj. The king was overwhelmed with compassion for his father and shed tears. The next morning, Maharaj Vaikhaanasa described what he had seen in his dream to his council of twice born learned brahmins.

" ' O brahmanas,' the king addressed them, 'in a dream last night I saw my father suffering on a hellish planet. He was crying out in anguish, "O son, please deliver me from this torment of this hellish condition !" Now I have no peace in my mind, and even this beautiful kingdom has become unbearable to me. Not even my horses, elephants, and chariots and my vast wealth in my treasury that formerly brought so much pleasure, gives me no

pleasure

at

all.

" 'Everything, O best of the brahmins, even my own wife and sons, have become a source of unhappiness since I beheld my father suffering the tortures of that hellish condition so. Where can I go, and what can I do, O brahmins, to alleviate this misery? My body is burning with fear and sorrow ! Please tell me what kind of charity, what mode of fasting, what austerity, or what deep meditation, and in service upon which Deity I may have to perform to deliver my father from that agony and bestow upon liberation upon my forefathers. O best among the brahmins, what is the use of one's being a powerful son if one's father must suffer on a hellish planet? Truly, such a son's life is utterly useless, to him and to his forefathers.

" The twice born brahmins replied, 'O king, in the mountainous forest not far from here is the ashram where a great saint Parvata Muni resides. Please go to him, for he is tri-kala-jnan (he knows the past, the present, and the future of everything) and can surely help you in your gaining relief from your misery.'

"Upon hearing this advise, the distressed king immediately set out on a journey to the ashram of the famous sage Parvata Muni. The ashram was indeed very big and housed many learned sages expert in chanting the sacred hymns of the four Vedas (Rg, Yajur, Sama, and Arthava). Approaching the holy ashram, the king beheld Parvata Muni seated among the assembly of sages adorned with hundreds of tilaks (from all the authorised sampradayas) like another Brahmaa or Vyaas.

"Maharaj Vaikhaanasa offered his humble obeisances to the muni, bowing his head and then prostrating his entire body before him. After the king had seated himself among the assembly Parvata Muni asked him about the welfare of the seven limbs of his extensive kingdom (his ministers, his treasury, his military forces, his allies, the brahmins, the sacrificial offerings performed, and the needs of his subjects). The muni also asked him if his kingdom was free of troubles and whether everyone was peaceful, happy and satisfied. To these enquiries the king replied, 'By your mercy O glorious and great sage, all seven limbs of my kingdom are doing very well. Yet there is a problem that has recently arisen, and to solve it I have come to you, O brahmana for your expert help and guidance'.

"Then Parvata Muni, the best of all sages, closed his eyes and meditated on

the king's past, present and future. After a few moments he opened his eyes and said, 'Your father is suffering the results of committing a great sin, and I have discovered what it is. In his previous life he quarrelled with his wife and forcibly enjoyed her sexually during her menstrual period. She tried to protest and resist his advances and even yelled out, "Someone please save me! Please, O husband, do not interrupt my monthly period in this way!" Still he did not stop or leave her alone. It is on account of this grievous sin that your father now has fallen into such a hellish condition of suffering.'

"King Vaikhaanasa then said, 'O greatest among sages, by what process of fasting or charity may I liberate my dear father from such a condition? Please tell me how I can relieve and remove the burden of his sinful reactions, which are a great obstacle to his progress toward ultimate release (salvation - liberation - going back home).'

"Parvata Muni replied, 'During the light fortnight of the month of Margashirsha there occurs an Ekadasi called Mokshadaa. If you observe this sacred Ekadasi strictly, with a full fast, and give directly to your suffering father the merit you thus attain/obtain, he will be freed from his pain and instantly liberated'.

"Hearing this, Maharaj Vaikhaanasa profusely thanked the great sage and then returned to his palace to perform his vrata (austere rite). O Yudhishtira, when the light part of the month of Margashirsha at last arrived, Maharaj Vaikhaanasa faithfully waited for the Ekadasi tithi to arrive. He then perfectly and with full faith observed the Ekadasi fast with his wife, children, and other relatives. He dutifully gave the merit from this fast to his father, and as he made the offering, beautiful flower petals showered down from the devas who peered out from behind the clouds in the sky. The king's father was then praised by the messengers of the demigods (devas) and escorted to the celestial region. As he passed his son, as he traversed the lower to middle to higher planets, the father said to the king, 'My dear son, all auspiciousness unto you!'

At last he reached the heavenly realm from where he can again with his newly acquired merit perform devotional service to Krishna or Vishnu and in due course return back to home back to Godhead.

"O son of Pandu, who so ever strictly observes the sacred Mokshadaa Ekadasi, following the established rules and regulations, achieves full and

perfect liberation after death. There is no better fasting day than this Ekadasi of the light fortnight of the month of Margashirsha, O Yudhishtira, for it is a crystal-clear and sinless day. Whoever faithfully observes this Ekadasi fast, which is like chintaa-mani (a gem that yields all desires), obtains special merit that is very hard to calculate, for this day can elevate one from hellish life to the heavenly planets, and for one who observes Ekadasi for his own spiritual benefit, this elevates one to go back to Godhead, never to return to this material world."

Thus end the narration of the glories of Margashirsha-shukla Ekadasi or Mokshada Ekadasi, from the Brahmanda Purana.