



# श्री सनातन धर्म सभा – दक्षिण आफ्रिका

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## Ekadashi Vrat

### 1. Introduction

Ekadashi is an auspicious day for austerities and worship dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The word Ekadashi means eleventh and refers to the “thithi” (Hindu date) on which it is observed. Each Hindu month has two “pakshas” comprising 15 thithis each. A thithi is similar to a day. However, it does not necessarily begin at sunrise and end at sunset. The pakshas are called the Krishna Paksha (“dark fortnight”) and the Shukla Paksha (“bright fortnight”). We, therefore, have two Ekadashi every Hindu month, one in the dark fortnight and one in the bright fortnight, on which devotees observe fast and worship Lord Vishnu. There are 24 Ekadashi in a year (and 26 Ekadashi in a year in which there is Adhik Maas).

### 2. Names of the Ekadashi

The table below shows the Hindu Month (Lunar Month) and the name of the corresponding Ekadashi.

Month	Name Krishna Paksha (dark fortnight)	Month	Name Shukla Paksha (bright fortnight)
<b>Margashirsha</b>	Uthpanna Ekadashi	<b>Margashirsha</b>	Mokshada Ekadashi
<b>Pausha</b>	Saphala Ekadashi	<b>Pausha</b>	Putrada Ekadashi
<b>Maagha</b>	Shat-thila Ekadashi	<b>Maagha</b>	Jaya Ekadashi
<b>Phalguna</b>	Vijaya Ekadashi	<b>Phalguna</b>	Aamalki Ekadashi
<b>Chaitra</b>	Paapmochini Ekadashi	<b>Chaitra</b>	Kaamada Ekadashi
<b>Vaishakha</b>	Varuthini Ekadashi	<b>Vaishakha</b>	Mohini Ekadashi
<b>Jyeshtha</b>	Aparaa Ekadashi	<b>Jyeshtha</b>	Nirjala Ekadashi
<b>Aashadh</b>	Yogini Ekadashi	<b>Aashadh</b>	Devashayini Ekadashi
<b>Shravana</b>	Kaamika Ekadashi	<b>Shravana</b>	Putrada Ekadashi
<b>Bhadrapada</b>	Ajaa Ekadashi	<b>Bhadrapada</b>	Padma Ekadashi
<b>Ashwin</b>	Indira Ekadashi	<b>Ashwin</b>	Paashankusha Ekadashi
<b>Karthik</b>	Rama Ekadashi	<b>Karthik</b>	Prabhodhini Ekadashi
<b>Adikmaas</b>	Padmini Ekadashi	<b>Adikmaas</b>	Parama Ekadashi

### **3. Day/date of observance and who should observe the fast:**

There are various rules for determining the date of observance, depending on whether one is a Vaishnava (often described as one who has been given diksha of a Vaishnava) or a Smartha. The general rule is that Ekadashi should not be observed on a day when the tenth (Dashmi) thithi rules at sunrise. The Ekadashi dates are reflected in the panchang (Hindu almanack), and the date is specified with respect to Smartas or Vaishnavas. Quite often, the dates are the same for both Smartas and Vaishnavas; however, the date of observance is sometimes a day later for Vaishnavas.

Dr P V Kane (History of Dharamsastra) summarises as follows: “In the case of Vaishnavas, if Dashmi thithi extends on a civil day beyond 56 ghatikas from sunrise, then Ekadashi follows and continues for the whole of the next civil day, there is then what is called Arunodavedha and Vaishnavas cannot observe fast on such an Ekadashi. The same result follows if Dashmi persists till the exact time when the sun rises, and then Ekadashi starts.” (this does not apply to Smartha). In such cases, Vaishnavas should observe the fast on Dwadashi (twelfth thithi).

All those who observe the fast sincerely, whether they are Vaishnavas, Smartha, householders, men, women - including widows will benefit from the observance.

## **4. How is the fast observed?**

- 4.1. The fast commences on the Dashmi (tenth) thithi – only one meal is taken on this day. That night, one should sleep alone on a mat of kusa.
- 4.2. The next morning (Ekadashi), having risen before sunrise and having completed personal routines and bathing, one should make a declaration (sankalp) of observing the fast. The ideal is not to take any food or even water throughout the day and night, to be truthful, and to give up activities relating to material desire, anger, pride and greed.
- 4.3. Perform Sandhya
- 4.4. During the day, assemble all the requirements for Shodasupchaar (16 offerings) Puja – which should be done during the evening/night.
- 4.5. The Pooja procedure, according to the Brahmavaivarta-Mahapurana Krishna Janma Kaanda Ch 26)
  - Chant Swasthi Vachan
  - Offer worship to Ganesh & Gauri
  - Kalash & Varuna Pooja

- Surya & Naugraha Pooja
- Vishnu Pooja
- Shiva and Parvathi Pooja
- Agni Pooja and Hawan
- Chant the name of Sri Hari
- Meditate on Sri Krishna, chanting/listening to His Dhyaan Mantras (Verses 55 to 61)
- Perform Shodash Upchaar Pooja to Sri Krishna (see Verses 62 to 80 for Mantras)
- Prarthna to Sri Krishna (verses 82 to 87)
- Offer daan/Dakshina
- Remain awake throughout the night
- On Dwadashi (twelfth) thithi one should break fast with food offered to the Lord (food left over from the yajna).

It becomes clear from the above that there is no restriction on Pooja and offerings (including Hawan) to Bhagawan on Ekadashi.

## 5. Alternate ways of observance

Depending on one's health, ability and circumstances, various authorities have suggested alternatives to the strict fast mentioned in point 4 above. However, the alternatives do grant reduced benefits.

The ideal fast is that in which no food (including roots, fruit and milk) is taken, and this grants full benefits. The Narada Puraan states:

यानि कानि च पापानि ब्रह्महत्यासमानि च । अन्नमाश्रित्य तिष्ठन्ति संप्राप्ते हरिवासरे ॥ तानि पापान्यवाप्नोति मुञ्चानो हरिवासरे । रटन्तीह पुराणानि भूयो भूयो वरानने । न भोक्तव्यं न भोक्तव्यं संप्राप्ते हरिवासरे ॥

yāni kāni ca pāpāni brahmahatyāsamāni ca | annamāśritya tiṣṭhanti samprāpte harivāsare || tāni pāpānyavāpnoti muñjāno harivāsare | raṭantīha purāṇāni bhūyo bhūyo varānane | na bhoktavyaṁ na bhoktavyaṁ samprāpte harivāsare ||

***All sins take resort to food on the day of Hari; one who partakes of food on Ekadashi incurs those sins. One should not eat food when the day of Hari comes.***

The other options (each with respectively reduced benefits) are:

- to have water only
- to have milk and water
- to have thil, milk and water
- to have fruit, thil, milk and water

- to have a meal at night

The Ekadashi vrat can be of two types, viz nitya (obligatory) and kanya (observed to secure some desired object). In the Naradiya Puraan, it is stated that those who are devoted to Vishnu and who look upon Vishnu as the highest goal should always fast on Ekadashi in each paksha (fortnight).

In following one of these options, one needs to still guard against making elaborate preparations merely to satisfy one's senses. It must be noted that the Brahma Vaivarta Purana states that "Audhanam" – cooked rice is considered to be the abode of sin. However, during Ekadashi, all bhojan should be avoided.

Swami Sivananda, in his book entitled "Hindu Fasts and Festivals," states that devotees should fast on Ekadashi, observe night vigil throughout the night, do Japa, Hari Kirtan, and meditate. Those who are unable to fast completely can take some light fruit and milk. Whatever happens, one should not take any rice.

## **6. Conclusion:**

Ekadashi is observed in various ways; however, the common idea is to either engage in a complete fast or abstain from eating rice/grains. Whatever method we observe must be accompanied by offering worship to the Supreme Lord, chanting His name and reciting/listening to His kathas. We have summarised the information extracted from various sources in the hope that readers will observe the fast, irrespective of the branch of Hinduism that they follow.

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