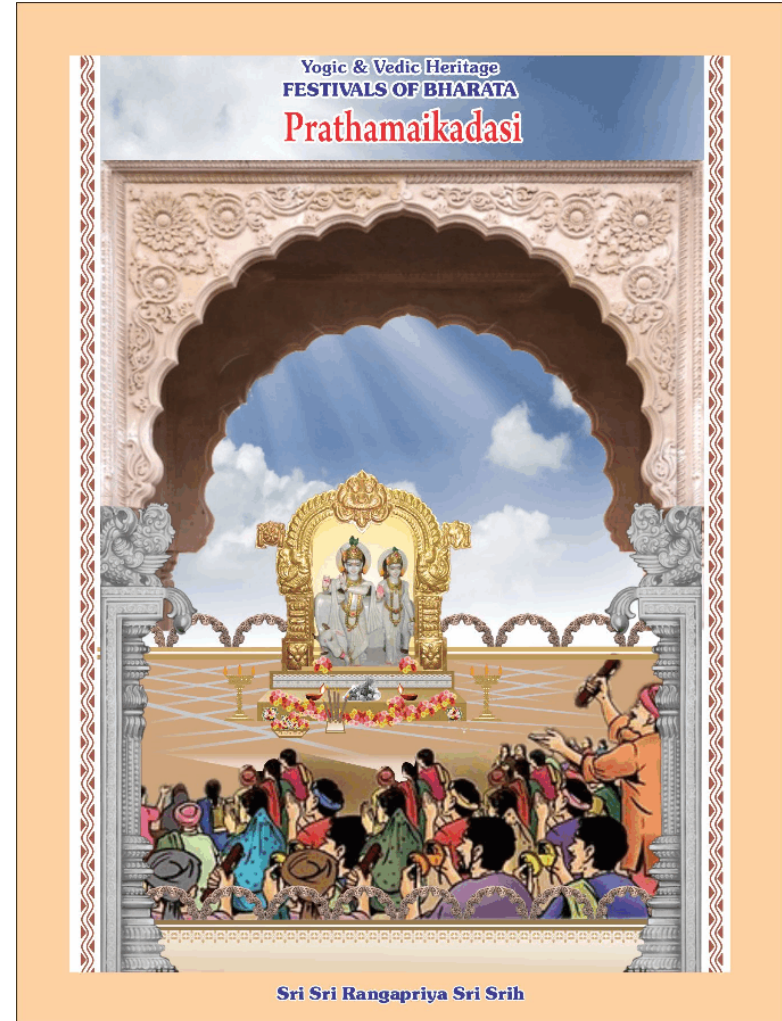




Bharatha Samskruthi Prakashana
 No.37/8, G4, Leesa Apartment, 4th Cross,
 Lalbagh Road, Bangalore 560 027
 Phone : 080-22278231, 26765381, Mobile : 9448078231
 URL : www.bharathasamskruthi.com,
 Email : bspllg@gmail.com



Title : Prathamaikādaśī Under Yogic & Vedic Heritage FESTIVALS OF BHĀRATA - A collection of Festivals of India, Original in Kannada by Sri Sri Rangapriya Sri Srih, Translated into English by Prof. K.S. Sridharan, Dr. Hungi Eswara, and Viswanatha Sharma, and Published by Bharatha Samskruthi Prakashana, Bangalore-560 027.

E-Edition : January 2016 No. of pages: 38 Price: 25

We Dedicate this Sacred Treasure at the holy lotus feet of

Sriranga Mahaguru and SriMata

© with publisher

Published by:

Bharatha Samskruthi Prakashana

No.37/8, G4, Leesa Apartment, 4th Cross,

Lalbagh Road, Bangalore 560 027

Phone : 080-22278231, 26765381, Mobile : 9448078231

URL : www.bharathasamskruthi.com,

Email : bspllg@gmail.com

Cover Design : Chandranatha Acharya

Inside Pictures : Basavaraj R Algur

Copies available at :

Bharatha Darshana,

No.163, Manjunatha Road,

2nd Block, Thyagaraja Nagar,

Bangalore 560 028; Ph: 080-26765381

Printed By :

Laser Line Graphics,

Bangalore 560027

Transliteration followed in this book

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ	e	ai	o	au	am	ah
क	ख	ख	ग	ङ											
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa											
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ											
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña											
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण											
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa											
त	थ	द	ध	न											
ta	tha	da	dha	na											
प	फ	ब	भ	म											
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma											
य	र	ल	व	श											ष
ya	ra	la	va	śa	sha	sa	ha								

Example:

क	का	कि	की	कु	कू	कृ	क्लृ	के	कै	को	कौ	कं	कः
ka	kā	ki	kī	ku	kū	kṛ	klṛ	ke	kai	ko	kau	kam	kah



Prathamaikādaśī

Prathamaikādaśī is one of the most important festivals observed in our country. The *Ekādaśī* which falls in the *śuklapaksha* of the month of *Āshāḍha* is called by this name. This festival is also called by names such as *Ekādaśī*, festival of fasting, *mahaikādaśī*, *sāyanī* etc. This happens to be a very important *parva* observed by virtuous people of all the *varṇas* and *Āśramas*, and people belonging to all sects such as *Śaiva*, *Vaiṣṇava* etc.

1) ***Nāmanīrvacana*** (explanation of the name): This is called *Ekādaśī* as this is a *vrata* related to the *Ekādaśī tithi*. *Ekādaśī* comes twice every month. But this *Ekādaśī* is the most important of all *Ekādaśīs*, and so is called by that name. There is a rule that those who cannot afford to observe the other *Ekādaśīs* in the prescribed manner, should observe at least this *Ekādaśī*. Thus, this is specially

called *Ekādaśī*. For example, all the *caturdaśīs* of the *Kṛṣṇapaksha* of every month are *Śivarātris* only. But only the *caturdaśī* of the *Kṛṣṇapaksha* of the *Māghamāsa* is called *Śivarātri*. Just as *Śivarātri* is so called because of the special importance it carries on that day, the above said *Ekādaśī* of the *śuklapaksha* of *Āshāḍha* is called *Ekādaśī*.

Prathamaikādaśī means the first *Ekādaśī*. When the *Ekādaśīs* of the *śuklapaksha* of all the months are *Prathamaikādaśīs*, how come only this is called *Prathamaikādaśī*? It is because,

1. There is a custom among some Hindus to begin the year with *varshaṛtu* (rainy season). (The synonym *varsha* for *samvatsara* indicates this.) As per that reckoning, this *Ekādaśī* occurs at the beginning of the year, and so the name *Prathamaikādaśī*.

2. As this *Ekādaśī* immediately precedes the beginning of ‘*cāturmāsya*’ which happens to be an important *vrata*, this is referred to as *Prathamaikādaśī*.

3. The word ‘*prathama*’ is also used to mean ‘the very best’, (scholars have noted that the word ‘*prathama*’, used by *Kālidāsa* in his *meghasandēśa* also means ‘the best’, in the verse ‘*Āshāḍhasya prathama divase*.’ If the meaning for the word

Prathama here is taken in the sense of 'First', the *Utthānadvādaśī* referred to in stanza 47 falls short by 20 days). Also, as this happens to be the most auspicious among the *Ekādaśīs*, this is duly called *Prathamaikādaśī*. The other name *Mahaikādasi* also signifies the greatness of this *vrata*. Though this comes in the *dakṣiṇāyāna*, it is called *sāyanī* also because it bestows the path of *Devayāna* called *uttarāyāna*.

As this this is a great festival during which the rules of fasting have to be (specially) observed, it is referred to as 'a festival of fasting'. In this sense, even the *MahāŚivarātri* is a festival of fasting only.

2. Statements of scriptures which prescribe fasting:

We come across hundreds of statements in *smṛtis*, *purāṇas*, history, and *parva mīmāṃsā* literature, which ordain fasting on this day. Some of them may be noted here.

1). The *purāṇas* proclaim time and again - "On the day of *Harivāsara* (i.e. *Ekādaśī*), all the sins take refuge in food. So, a person taking food on that day, becomes a party for those sins. So, never take food on a *Harivāsara*"

यानि कानि च पापानि ब्रह्महत्यासमानि च ।

अन्नमाश्रित्य तिष्ठन्ति सम्प्राप्ते हरिवासरे ॥

(नारदीयपुराण, 24-4)

तानि पापान्यवाप्नोति भुञ्जानो हरिवासरे ।

रटन्तीह पुराणानि भूयो भूयो वरानने ॥

न भोक्तव्यं न भोक्तव्यं सम्प्राप्ते हरिवासरे

(मत्स्यपुराण 23-24)

सत्यं सर्वाणि पापानि ब्रह्महत्यादिकानि च ।

सन्त्येवौदनमाश्रित्य श्रीकृष्णव्रतवासरे ॥

(ब्रह्मवैवर्त-कृष्णजन्मखण्ड)

Nāradya states that this fasting is an obligatory scriptural rule that has to be observed.

नित्यं भक्तिसमायुक्तैः सर्वैर्विष्णुपरायणैः ।

पक्षे पक्षे तु कर्तव्यमेकादश्यामुपोषणम् ॥

(नारदीयपुराण 10-238)

Sage *Kātyāyana* is of the opinion that this is a *kāmya vrata*.

संसारसागरोत्तारमिच्छन्विष्णुपरायणः

ऐश्वर्यं सन्ततिं स्वर्गं मुक्तिं वा यद्यदिच्छति

एकादश्यां न भुञ्जीत पक्षयोरुभयोरपि ॥

(कात्यायन 10-239)

Sage *Devala* is of the opinion that, the rule that one should not take food on both the *Ekādaśīs* of a month applies to only *yatis* and *Vānaprasthas*, and *gr̥hasthas* should observe only the *Ekādaśī* of the *śuklapaksha*.

एकादश्यां न भुञ्जीत पक्षयोरुभयोरपि ।

वनस्थयतिधर्मोऽयं शुक्लामेव सदा गृही ॥

(देवलस्मृति)

But this rule is applicable only to *non-Vaishnavas*.

शुक्लामेव तु कुर्वन्ति गृहिणो वैष्णवेतराः ।

न कृष्णालङ्घने दोषस्तेषां वेदेषु नारद ॥

(ब्रह्मवैवर्तपुराण 4-26-38)

There are also statements which ordain that *gr̥hasthas* should fast only on *Kṛṣṇa Ekādaśīs* that fall between *Āśadhaśuklaikādaśī* and *Kārtikaśuddhaikādaśī* which are respectively called *śayanī* and *bodhinī*, and that they should not observe fast on the remaining *Kṛṣṇa Ekādaśīs*.

शयनी बोधिनीमध्ये या कृष्णैकादशी भवेत् ।

सैवोपोष्या गृहस्थेन नान्या कृष्णा कदाचन ॥ ब्रह्मवैवर्त 4-26-39)

We also come across statements which tell that a householder blessed by male progeny, should not fast on the days of *Saṅkrānti*, *Ekādaśīs* of *Kṛṣṇapaksha* and eclipses.

सङ्क्रान्त्यामुपवासं च कृष्णैकादशिवासरे

चन्द्रसूर्यग्रहे चैव न कुर्यात्पुत्रवान् गृही ॥ (नारद and ब्रह्मपुराण)

The *Bhavishyottara Purāṇa* says that the rule which prescribes fasting on both the *Ekādaśīs* of the two *pakshas*, applies only to *brahmacāris*, *sanyāsis* and widows. And *Gr̥hasthas* should observe fast only on the *Śukla Ekādaśī*.

एकादश्यां न भुञ्जीत पक्षयोरुभयोरपि)

ब्रह्मचारी च नारी च शुक्लामेव सदा गृही ॥

But the authors *Hemādri* and *Halāyudha*, in their work *parvamīmamsa* state that *Vaishṇavas* of all *Āśramas* should fast on *Ekādaśīs* of both the fortnights.

वस्तुतस्तु वैष्णवानां सपुत्राणां गृहस्थानामपि

सर्वाः कृष्णाः नित्याः'' तद्यथा

यथा शुक्ला तथा कृष्णा यथा कृषा तथेतरा ।

तुल्ये ते मन्यते यस्तु स वै वैष्णव उच्यते ॥

Greatness (glory) of fasting on *Ekādaśī*:

The significance of fasting on *Ekādaśī* has been greatly described by the *śāstras*. A few of them may be noted here.

The *Padmapurāṇa* says -

As a result of fasting on *Ekādaśī*, the firewood of sins accumulated over hundreds of births gets burnt to ashes. Even the benefit accrued by performing *mahāyāgas* does not amount to even the one sixteenth part of the religious merit gained by fasting on *Ekādaśī*. Even great pilgrimage centers cannot equal this. This bestows great worldly benefits such as heaven, *moksha*, kingdom, virtuous children, good wife, good health etc.

अश्वमेधसहस्राणि राजसूयशतानि च ।

एकादश्युपवासस्य कलां नार्हन्ति षोडशीम् ॥

स्वर्गमोक्षप्रदा ह्येषा शरीरारोग्यदायिनी ।

सुकलत्रप्रदा ह्येषा जीवत्पुत्रप्रदायिनी ॥

न गङ्गा न गया भूप न काशी न च पुष्करम् ।

न चापि वैष्णवं क्षेत्रं तुल्यं हरिदिनेन च ॥

यमुना चन्द्रभागा न तुल्या हरिदिनेन तु ।

अनायासेन येनात्र प्राप्यते वैष्णवं पदम् ॥

(पद्मपुराण, आदिखण्ड 31, 157, 160-162)

The moment the word *Ekādaśī* falls on their ears, even *yamadūtas* become hesitant.

“श्रुत्वा चैकादशी नाम यमदूताश्च शङ्किताः (*Padmapurāṇa*, *Brahmakhandā*). "A certain woman, who was a worst sinner, happened to fast in *Ekādaśī* due to some anger and died. Even she became purified."

निराहार कृताद्वै च निर्मला सा बभूव ह (पद्मपुराण ब्रह्मखण्ड)

"If the *puṇya* accrued from *prthvīdāna* (gifting of the whole earth) is placed on one pan of a balance, and the *phala* (benefit) accrued from fasting on *Ekādaśī* on the other, the latter happens to be more meritorious.

एकतः पृथिवीदानं एकत्र हरिवासरः ।

ततोप्येका महापुण्या इयमेकादशी वरा ॥ (गरुडपुराण)

Prathamaikādaśī is also well-known by the name *śayanaikādaśī* in the *sāstras*. In some texts we come across words such as ‘शयनी बोधिनी मध्ये या कृष्णैकादशी भवेत् सायनैकादशी’ It is indeed hard to reason how the word *śayana* has come to get associated with *Ekādaśī* here. It is possible that, the word *śāyana*, either by mispronunciation or due to a printing error, has become ‘*sāyana*’.

1) Why then, this is called by the name *śayanaikādaśī*? *Śayana* means going to bed or sleeping. It is not the *Sādhakas* who are supposed to sleep on this day. *Jnānis* say that *Sādhakas* should keep themselves awake during the whole day and

also during the night (if possible), and meditate upon God and praise his glory.

एकादश्यामहोरात्रं कर्तव्यं भो जन त्रयम् ।

अहोरात्रोपवासश्च जागरो हरिपूजनम् ॥

In that case which sleep is intended by the word *śayana* here? The scriptures say that it refers to the sleep of the great Lord, *MahāVishṇu*, who is specially worshipped in this *parva*. He sleeps on the day of *Āshadhaśukladvādaśī* and wakes up on *Kartikaśukla dvādaśī*. In the meantime he may also turn over on his side, in the month of *bhādrapadamāsa*.

“शेते विष्णुस्सदाऽषाढे भाद्रे च परिवर्तते ।

कार्तिके च प्रबुद्ध्येत शुक्लपक्षे हरेर्दिने ॥ ”

“स्वापस्तु विष्णोर्मिथुने शुक्लद्वादशिका तिथौ ।

पवित्रं विदधीतैव मिथुनस्थे दिवाकरे ॥ ”

“दुग्धाब्धौ शेषपर्यङ्के आषाढ्यां संविशेद्धरिः ।

निद्रां त्यजति कार्तिक्यां तयोस्सम्पूजयेद्धरिम् ॥ ”

“विष्णुः स्वपिति कर्कटे”

“आषाढशुक्लद्वादश्यां शयनं कुरुते हरिः”

Thus, in the background of Lord *Vishṇu* assuming *nidrāmudrā* on *Āshadhaśukladvādaśī*, the term ‘*śayanaikādaśī*’ matches clearly, as this *parva* occurs on the preceeding day.

(ii) When should we celebrate *Prathamaikādaśī*? It is very clear that it should be

celebrated on *Āshaḍaśukla Ekādaśī*. If *Ekādaśī tithi* happens to overlap with the *Dvādasi tithi* of the next day, or *Daśami tithi* of the preceding day, when should it be observed? In this regard, we come across contradicting opinions.

Śāstras state that (in some distinct contexts), fasting can be observed on the day of *Ekādaśī*, though touched by *Daśami*.

“एकादशी न लभ्येत सकला द्वादशी यदि ।
उपोष्या दशमी विद्धा ऋषिरुद्दालकोऽब्रवीत्” ॥
त्रयोदश्यां न लभ्येत द्वादशी यदि किञ्चन ।
उपोष्यैकादशी तत्र दशमी मिश्रितापि च” ॥

Also there are abundant scriptural statements that state that there should be no *vedha* of *daśamī tithi* on *Ekādaśī vratopavāsa*. And even if there happens to be a little *vedha*, that day should be given up, and fasting should be observed only on *Dvādaśī*.

“कलार्धेनापि विद्धा स्याद्दशम्यैकादशी यदा ।
तदा ह्येकादशीं त्यक्त्वा द्वादशीं समुपोषयेत् ॥”
नोपोष्या दशमीविद्धा सदैवैकादशी तिथिः ।”
“द्वादशीमिश्रिता कार्या सर्वत्रैकादशी तिथिः ।”
“सर्वप्रकारवेधोऽयं उपवासस्य दूषकः ।”
“न दशम्या युतां क्वचित्”
“उपोष्या द्वादशी तत्र य इच्छेत्परमां गतिम्”

And it does not help even if an option is provided by stating that fasting connected with *Ekādaśī* can be done, in either cases of *Ekādaśī* having *vedha* with *Daśami* or *Dvādaśī*, for, there are many statements, which condemn fasting on *Ekādaśī* as very mean, if it has *vedha* with *Daśami*.

“तामुपोष्य नरो जह्यात्पुण्यं वर्षशतोद्भवं”
“तस्यापत्यविनाशाय परेत्य नरकं व्रजेत्”
“तदा त्याज्या विशेषेण गङ्गाम्भः श्रद्धतौ यथा”

"If fasting is done on *Ekādaśī* having *vedha* with *Daśamī*, it causes loss of *punya*, harm to children, and pushes one to hell. Because *Gāndhārī* observed fasting on such a day, she lost all her hundred sons. The benefits of fasting on such a day go to *mohinī* (an evil spirit in the form of a beautiful woman)"

दशमीशेषसंयुक्ता गान्धार्या समुपोषिता ।
तस्या पुत्रशतं नष्टं तस्मात्तां परिवर्जयेत् ॥”
ऊचुस्ते मोहिनीं देवा लोकसंमोहनाय च ।
दत्तं मोहिनि ते स्थानं प्रत्यूषे दशमीयुतम् ॥”

Only *Vaishnavas* are barred from observing a fast when *Daśamī vedha* is there at the time of *Arunodaya*.

“दशमीशेषसंयुक्तो यदि स्यादरुणोदयः ।
नैवोपोष्यं वैष्णवेन तस्मिन्नैकादशीव्रतम् ॥”

Non-*Vaishnavas* should observe *Ekādaśī* even if there is *vedha* of *daśamī*.

Dayāndasarasvati ridicules the idea of stipulating different *Ekādaśī* days for *Smārtas* and *Vaishṇavas*. "The division of *Smārtas*, *Vaishṇavas* and *ŚrīVaishṇavas* is of recent origin. How can this figure in the opinion of sages who wrote *śāstras*?" he says. Also, we come across many a handiwork, such as creating new stories to condemn the opinion of others and to defend one's own, composing new sentences and inserting them in the text of the *śāstras* written in old palm leaves etc. And so, it becomes difficult to identify interpolations and the genuine text parts as well.

As per the prevalent practice, *Ekādaśī* is observed by those who are called *Smārtas*, on the day when the *Ekādaśī tithi* has more pervasion, in spite of the *vedha* of *Daśami*. *Vaishṇavas* and *ŚrīVaishṇavas* do not observe *Ekādaśī vrata* on the day when it has the *vedha* of *Daśami*. One may try to provide a solution by saying that it is proper if people of different categories follow their respective traditions. Even some *Ācāryas* who have proclaimed that fasting on *Ekādaśī* should be observed on the day which is free from *vedha* have said "Let them observe fasting at least on the day with *vedha*. It will anyhow please Lord *Śrīhari*". (*haridina tilakam* of *Ācārya venkatanātha*).

"But, why is that contradicting opinions in the ancient *śāstras* are seen regarding the observance of

Ekādaśī which is distinguished (by the division such as) the one with *vedha* of *Daśami* and the other without? What has the present classification viz *smārtas*, *Vaishṇavas* and *ŚrīVaishṇavas* got to do with the above said *śāstraic* words? This question remains to be solved. Even the '*Kāzinyāya* (A kannada word which means "a verdict which is meant to satisfy both the parties in a dispute." *Śāstraic* words?") cannot be applied here. Then which of the two traditions is right? **We placed this question before *ŚrīRaṅgamahāguru* who was endowed with the capacity of measuring the effect of the observance of that *vrata* on the human body and soul with the help of the relevant scientific knowledge, and who was able to comprehend the benefits obtained by observing the *vrata* on both the days, and also what one may lose by abstaining from that observance, and also the different kinds of beneficial effects. He could comprehend these with practical knowledge, and not by mere bookish knowledge.**

"Both the traditions are correct" came the answer. "How could both be correct?" "Is it not ridiculous to have different arrangements for *Smārtas*, *Vaishṇavas*, *ŚrīVaishṇavas* Etc?" was our next question. He commanded—"I did not mean that kind of an arrangement. There are two types of people who observe fast; The ones who

belong to the first type desire only *moksha*. The people of the second type desire in addition of *moksha*, the other accomplishments of life viz. *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma*. The *tithi* without *Daśami vedha* is suitable for the people of the first type, and the *tithi* with *Daśami vedha* is suitable for the second type."

विद्धा समैकादश्या गृह्यत्योर्व्यवस्थिते''

“शुद्धैव द्वादशी राजन्नुपोष्या मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ।

सकामैर्गृहिभिः पूर्वविद्धापीति विनिश्चयः ॥

Much later, we happened to come across scriptural statements which also express the same opinion.

On the whole, it can be stated that both the days, i.e the one with *Daśami Vedha* and the one without, are appropriate for the observance of *Ekādaśī*. We wish to put forth the conclusion that the assigning of (*Ekādaśī*) depends on the objective with which one observes this *parva*.

iii) Who are authorized to observe *Ekādaśī*?

Some say that *Ekādaśī* is a *Vaiṣṇavite vrata* and so only *Vaishṇavas* should observe it. Those belonging to *śaiva*, *soura* and other sects need not observe it. This is not correct. Even though it is called '*haridina*' owing to the importance of *Vishṇu* in the *vrata*, people belonging to all sects can profit by this, as it possesses a *Kāladharma* which is

helpful for the meditation on the *parañjyoti*. *Śāstras* state that though *Śivarātri* is mainly a *vrata* for the worship of *Śiva*, it is proper for *Vaishṇavas* also to observe it.

शैवो वा वैष्णवो वापि यो वा स्यादन्यपूजकः

सर्वं पूजाफलं हन्ति शिवरात्रिबहिर्मुखः ॥ (दशनिर्णयी, पु. 144)

Śāstras proclaim the same purport regarding *Ekādaśī* also.

वैष्णवो वाथ शैवो वा कुर्यादिकादशीव्रतम्''

वैष्णवो वाथ शैवो वा सौरोप्येतत्समाचरेत्'' (सौरपुराण)

Is *Ekādaśī nitya* or *kāmya*? *Śāstras* state that big blemishes may be caused, if it is not observed.

एकादश्यन्नकामस्य निष्कृतिः क्वापि नोदिता

न भोक्तव्यं न भोक्तव्यं सम्प्राप्ते हरिवासरे (नारद)

Therefore it is a *nityavrata*. Also, *Śāstras* say that a person who desires material comforts, progeny, wealth, *mukti* and all such things, can observe this *vrata*, and so, it is a *kāmya vrata* too.

य इच्छेद्विष्णुसायुज्यं सुतान्सम्पदमात्मनः ।

एकादश्यां न भुञ्जीत पक्षयोरुभयोरपि (विष्णुपुराण)

य इच्छेद्विष्णुसायुज्यं श्रियं सन्ततिमात्मनः ।

एकादश्यामुपवसेत्पक्षयोरुभयोरपि (कूर्मपुराण)

1. Exceptions to fasting:

We have noted the *śāstravākyas* which state that fasting is mandatory on the day of *Ekādaśī*, and it amounts to a great sin if fasting is not done

on that day. But there are some *śāstravākyas* which state that some need not fast and some should not.

Some words of authority say that the rule that one must fast on both the *Ekādaśīs* applies to non-*gr̥hasthas* and *gr̥hasthas* should fast only on the *Ekādaśīs* of *śuklapaksha*. For Example-

एकादश्यां न भुञ्जीत पक्षयोरुभयोरपि ।
वनस्थयतिधर्मोऽयं शुक्लामेव सदा गृही॥

(The rule of fasting on *Ekādaśīs* of both the *pakshas* applies to *vānaprasthas* and *yatis* only. *Gr̥hasthas* should observe fast only on the *Ekādaśī* of *śuklapaksha*)" - says the *Devalasmṛti*.

Padmapurāṇa and *Brahmavaivarta purāṇas* say that *gr̥hasthas* should observe fast only on the *Ekādaśīs* of the *Kṛshṇapakshas*, which come between *śayanī* and *Bodhinī Ekādaśīs*. On other *Ekādaśīs* of *Kṛshṇapaksha* they should not observe fast.

शयनीबोधिनीमध्ये या कृष्णैकादशी भवेत् ।
सैवोपोष्या गृहस्थेन नान्या कृष्णा कदाचन ॥

Bhavishyottara purāṇa says that *brahmacāris* and widows should observe fast on all *Ekādaśīs* of both the *pakshas*, whereas *gr̥hasthas* should fast only on *śukla Ekādaśīs*.

एकादश्यां न भुञ्जीत पक्षयोरुभयोरपि ।
ब्रह्मचारी च नारी च शुक्लामेव सदा गृही ॥

"*Sumaṅgalis* should observe fast only on *śukla Ekādaśīs* like the *gr̥hasthas*."

“एवं च सधवाया गृहस्थवत् शुक्लायामेवाधिकारः” ॥ (समय प्रकाश)

"A *gr̥hastha* having sons should not observe fast on *saṅkrānti*, *kṛshṇaikaḍāśī* and on the days of solar and lunar eclipses."

सङ्क्रान्त्यामुपवासं च कृष्णैकादशीवासरे ।
चन्द्रसूर्यग्रहे चैव न कुर्यात्पुत्रवान् गृही ॥

Says the *Nārādīya vacana*.

"All these statements refer to non-*Vaishṇavas*. *Vaishṇavas* must observe fast on both *śukla* and *Kṛshṇa Ekādaśīs*."

शुक्लामेव तु कुर्वन्ति गृहिणो वैष्णवेतराः ।
न कृष्णालङ्घने दोषस्तेषां वेदेषु नारद ॥

यथा शुक्ला तथा कृष्णा यथा कृष्णा तथेतरा ।
तुल्ये ते मन्यते यस्तु स वै वैष्णव उच्यते ॥ (तत्त्वसागर)

Śāstras opine that those who are below the age of eight years, and those above the age of eighty years need not observe fast.

अष्टवर्षाधिको मर्त्यो ह्यशीतिन्यूनवत्सरः ।
एकादश्यामुपवसेत् पक्षयोरुभयोरपि ॥ (कात्यायनीय)

2. Concessions to those who are unable to observe total fast:

Śāstras relax rules in the case of weak persons who cannot observe total fast, and state an *Anukalpa* (alternative)

"Rice should not be consumed at all on *Ekādaśīs*. But roots, common sweet potato, fruits, milk and water may be taken."

मूलं फलं पयस्तोयं उपभोज्यं मुनीश्वरैः ।

न त्वत्र भोजनं कैश्चिदेकादश्यां प्रदर्शितम् ॥ (नारद पुराण)

Those who cannot fast for the whole day may at least abstain from taking food at night. They may take *havishyānna* (rice cooked in milk) or other food items that are not prepared from rice. Fruits, sesame, milk, water, ghee or *pañcagavya* may be taken. The latter items are more excellent than the earlier ones.

नक्तं हविष्यानमनौदनं वा ।

फलं तिलाः क्षीरमथाम्बु चाज्यम्॥

यत्पञ्चगव्यं यदि वा च वायुः ।

प्रशस्तमत्रोत्तरमुत्तरं च ॥

The *vāyu* and the *varāha purāṇas* are of the opinion that any one of the food items mentioned above may be taken, depending upon the physical strength of a person.

"Those who are unable to fast and those who are above eighty years of age may observe alternatives such as *Ekābhukta* (*Ekābhukta* means eating only once in a day)"

उपवासे त्वशक्तानां आशीतेरुर्ध्वजीविनाम् ।

एकभुक्तादिकं कार्यमाह बौधायनो मुनिः ॥

This opinion of *Baudhāyana* is quoted by *Hemādri. Matsya purāṇa* also expresses the same opinion. Such weak persons may observe fast at noon, and eat only at night. "If they are ill, their son, disciple, etc may observe fast on their behalf and gift (pass on) the merit of fasting to them." We come across such statements in the following *ślokas*.

उपवासेष्वशक्तानां नक्तं भोजनमिष्यते ।

असामर्थ्ये शरीरस्य पुत्रादीन्कारयेद्ब्रतम् ॥

Ekābhukta means eating only once (i.e. in the evening between the 13th and 18th *ghatīs* i.e. (between 5.12 PM and 7.12 PM). 'Naktam' means, eating at night. (i.e. after sighting the stars at night) 'ayācita' means taking the food one gets without requesting for it. Those who cannot fast completely may do one of the above.

These are secondary. But the words of *Manu* should be remembered here which state – "It won't be *śāstra* approved, if one resorts to these, even though he is able to take up the first option. The one who does so is a fool. In the *Paraloka* he can not get the spiritual benefits of the observance of *vratas*."

प्रभुः प्रथमकल्पस्य योऽनुकल्पेन वर्तते ।

न साम्प्रायिकं तस्य दुर्मतेर्विद्यते फलम् ॥

Whatever may be the option resorted to, adherence to *Brahmacarya*, *Sadācāra*, *Ātmaṅṇas*, and worship of God etc., should be strictly observed.

3. The procedure of observing the *vrata*:-

Those who observe the *Ekādaśī vrata*, should with a solomen vow, pray Lord *Nārāyaṇa* to bestow his blessings for the flawless observance of *vratas* on all the three days viz., *Daśami*, *Ekādaśī* and *Dvādaśī*. They should eat only once even on *Daśami* and should observe *Brahmacarya*. They should not eat on a bronze plate, should not sleep during day time, and should not over eat or over drink. Eating meat is prohibited. Chewing betel leaves, gambling, consuming liquor and uttering falsehood etc. should be shunned. They should sleep on a bed, spread on the floor.

In the morning of *Ekādaśī*, teeth should be brushed with leaves. After bath and morning rituals, wearing a *darbha pavitra* (a ring made of *darbha* grass) and holding a copper vessel filled with water and sitting north faced, a prayer should be made to god with the solemn vow - "Lord *Acyuta*! Today I am observing a fast and shall do *pāraṇa* tomorrow. Kindly bless me in this." Or, a handful of flowers should be offered to Lord *Śrīhari* along with prayers. Those who cannot observe a total fast, should in their vow, utter the option they wish to follow. *Śaivas* should vow with *Rudragāyatri*. *Sūryopāsakas* should vow with the famous *Sāvitrī mantra*. The vow should be made along with the *Ashṭākshari Mahāmantra* pronounced three times.

In the beautifully decorated *manṭapa*, *pūja* should be offered to *Śrī Hari* with all the *upacāras*. The Lord should be hailed with words of victory. To the utmost of one's capacity, *Jāgaraṇa* should be observed in the night and the time has to be spent in praising and singing the glory of God.

एकादश्यां नरो यस्तु कुरुते जागरं नरः ।

गीतैर्नृत्यैस्तथा वाद्यैः प्रेक्षणीयैः पृथग्विधैः ॥

स याति वैष्णवं लोकं यं गत्वा न निवर्तते ।

सम्पूज्य विधिवद्रात्रौ कृत्वा चैव प्रजागरम् ॥

कथा वा गीतिका विष्णोः गायन् विष्णुपरायणः ।

याति विष्णोः परं स्थानं नरो नास्त्यत्र संशयः ॥

Thus, done with a vow, the observation comes to be called '*Ekādaśī Vrata*' (*Ekādaśī vrata* can also be done without the *sankalpa* by following the remaining rules.) There is will be no *homa* in this *vrata*.

The next morning, after the worship of God and feeding the Brāhmins, the *vrata* should be completed. This completion of observance is also called '*pāraṇa*'. It is so called because, the *vrata* can see the *pāra* (the other end) only by that (पार तीर कर्म समाप्तौ).

The completion will be only on *Dvādaśī*. And till this *vrata* is completed no other *vrata* should be taken up.

पारणान्तं व्रतं ज्ञेयं व्रतान्ते विप्रभोजनम् ।
असमाप्ते व्रते पूर्वं नैव कुर्याद्व्रतान्तरम् ॥

Full benefit of the *vrata* will be obtained only with the worship of Brahmins and their blessings.

The *kūrmapurāṇa* says that *Pāraṇa* should be observed only on *dvādaśī* and not on *Trayodaśī*. But if no trace of *dvādaśī* is there on the day next to the day of fasting, then *pāraṇa* will have to be done on *Trayodaśī* itself. Even the *Mādhyahnika* should be done in the morning itself on the day of *Dvādaśī*, and *Pāraṇa* lunch should be had. It is *Ekabhukta* only even on *Dvādaśī* and dinner should not be had. Sleeping during day time etc is prohibited.

The three some viz. *Daśami*, *Ekādaśī* and *Dvādasi*, is called 'haridina'. Even those who cannot observe *Ekādaśī*, should worship god during the dawn of *dvādaśī*, and should do *pāraṇa* in the morning. It is because, just like *Ekādaśī*, *Dvādaśī* also is independently an excellent day to propitiate God and a *vrata*dina. If it is not possible to do *pāraṇa* on time, at least *jalapāraṇa* (i.e. drinking of water) should be done. Thus, drinking of water in the prescribed manner will bestow the benefits of both *Bhojana* and *Upavāsa*.

यदपोऽश्रति तन्नैवाशितं नैवानशितम्''

(1) *Pūja and Jāgarāṇa*

The three *puṇyakāryas* (meritorious deeds) that have to be mainly performed on the day of *Ekādaśī* as per the *śāstraic* customs are— 1) day and night fasting 2) *Jāgarāṇa* and 3) worship of *Nārāyaṇa*.

एकादश्यामहोरात्रं कर्तव्यं भो जन त्रयम् ।
दिवारात्रोपवासश्च जागरो विष्णुपूजनम् ॥

The last one of the above i.e. the worship of god (both internal and external) should be specially done. Every person should do this to the best of his capacity. Among the three *tithis* viz., *Daśami*, *Ekādaśī* and *Dvādaśī* known as *Haridinas*, the middle one i.e. *Ekādaśī* is excellent for the worship of *Nārāyaṇa*. The inner spiritual centers related to Lord *Vishṇu* blossom naturally on that day. Just as a favourable wind helps a traveller, mother nature helps a *Sādhaka* to advance in the inward spiritual path. 'Gāḷi Bandāga Tūriko', (Rush your way when the wind blows favourably) is a proverb in *Kannada*. On this analogy, one should utilize the facility provided by nature and worship god in a special way and should obtain the desired accomplishments. This indeed is the intention of the *Jnānis*.

And now about *Jāgarāṇa* during the night. Generally people work during the day and spend the night in sleep. No doubt sleep is very good for health. But *śāstras* prescribe that the night hours of

Ekādaśī should not be squandered in sluggish sleep, and restraint should be exercised. And *Jāgaraṇa* should be observed as long as possible even on that night, for the purpose of remaining in the divine *Bhāva* which facilitates a slothless sleep, ie. *Brahmasamādhī*.

This observance of *Jāgaraṇa* is prescribed only to worship God with full devotion which is said to be nine fold viz. *Śrāvaṇa*, *Kīrtana*, *smaraṇa*, *Pādapūja*, *Arcana*, *Vandana*, *Dāśya*, *Sakhya* and *Ātmanīvedana*. And it should be noted that *Jāgaraṇa* (keeping oneself awake) is not an end in itself. During *Jāgaraṇa* one is supposed to be engaged in activities which nourish a divine *Bhāva*. But some people, under the wrong impression that *punya* is obtained anyway by merely keeping themselves awake during that time, engage themselves in either sports/entertainments or quarrel mongering. This is unscriptural and even amounts to *Adharma*. By this, the desired auspicious attainment is lost and the accrual of the unwished shall follow. Those who cannot afford a total fast, should keep awake as long as possible and should achieve *Jāgaraṇa* spiritually. If for any reason/s *Jāgaraṇa* happens to cause impairment either to one's health or meditation, it is better to resort to sleep.

ii) Discussion on fasting-

(1) **Literal meaning:** - Generally fasting means abstaining from food and drinks. Scriptures explain that abstaining from food and drinks externally, happens to be one of the external features connected with fasting.

“यज्ञेन तपसा अनाशकेन

(बृ.उ. IV-4-22)

एकादश्यां न भुञ्जीत पक्षयोरुभयोरपि”

(कात्यायन)

This *vrata* is also known by the names ‘*upavāsa*’, ‘*upavāsanam*’ ‘*aupvastam*’. ‘*Uposhitam*’ and ‘*uposhanam*’. As there are several meanings for verb roots, the meaning viz. abstaining from food has come to stay, says the *amarasudhākara* “अनेकार्थत्वादभोजने वृत्तिः” भोजनविरहस्य”, Though these meanings are in usage, some more important aspects come to light when their *avayavārthas* are examined. The words ‘*upavāsa*’, ‘*upavasana*’ mean living closer. (वस निवासे, उप समीपे वासः)

The word *Upavastā* means one who remains near and causes a stoppage. And that act of his is called ‘*aupavasta*’. (वस्तुस्तम्भे, उपवस्तुः कर्म औपवस्तम्)

The *avayavārtha* of *Uposhitam*, and *Uposhanam*’ is burning by remaining very close. (*usha-dāhe*). When these meanings are taken in connection with the *vrataniyamas*, questions such as, closer to whom should one live? In whose company should one remain? What should be

arrested? What should get burnt etc? arise. The answers that are obtained naturally to these questions are as follows: One should remain close to God; should possess *Ātmaguṇas*, should restrain the senses inactive, and should cause the bad deeds and the bad *samskāras* to get burnt down.

उपावृत्तस्य पापेभ्यो यस्तु वासो गुणैस्सह ।

उपवासस्स विज्ञेयो न शरीरस्य शोषणम् ॥

(To cease from sinful activities and to be in the company of *Ātmaguṇas* itself is *upavāsa*. *Upavāsa* is not merely oppressing the body).

कथाद्या गीतिका विष्णोर्गायन् विष्णुपरायणः ॥

(One should keep singing the praises and stories of *Śrīhari*, “पापालस्यादि वर्जितम्” (one should keep off from sinful acts and laziness etc.)—*Śāstravākyas* like these support this opinion.

In that case why did the term ‘*upavāsa*’ come to mean “giving up of food?” It is because, when one keeps himself close to God, he remains in the *Paramātmāsamādhi*, having burnt down both *punya* and *pāpa*, and has his senses inactive, he needs no food. The very sense organ ie the tongue, which tastes food and drinks, becomes powerless. The *Jñānendriyas* (viz. the sense organs which perceive sound, touch, form, taste and smell) get still. Thus in the real sense, it will be a state of total fast. And so, the fasting done externally symbolizing

the *upavāsa* within, comes to be called ‘*Upavāsa*’. Also, the absence of food in the body, and the absence of digestion of food facilitate meditation, and to remain close to God. This also has been a reason to make the word ‘*upavāsa*’ to aptly connote the sense of abstinence from taking food externally. Even the act of fasting that helps ‘*upavāsa*’, is also ‘*upavāsa*’.

(2) Why should one fast?

When a person goes on fast at regular intervals, the body becomes free from ailments. ‘लङ्घनं परमौषधम्’ says the *āyurveda*. This is a fact established by experience also. But the fasting prescribed as a part of the ritual, does not just result in bestowing health alone. No doubt health is very essential for meditation. “अनामयी यावदात्मानं सम्मन्यते”. But fasting helps *Dhyāna* in other ways also.

When food is consumed, the digestive organs and the mind get engaged in digesting the food and preventing the wear and tear of the body and helping in its upkeep. If they are ordered to stop their work and asked to function in a unidirectional disposition facilitating meditation, they may spite and deprecate. If forced to act they can hamper both *pravṛtti* and *Nivṛtti*. So, for a distinct period of time, they should be provided with rest from functions like digestion. Then they become capable of meditating on Good unidirectionally.

Another excellent way is to provide both the senses and the mind the objects of their desire and making them totally focussed on God. For example, the work (and object of desire) of the tongue is talking, and hearing is the work of the ears. By directing them respectively to sing the glory of God and to listen to the stories of God and making them work accordingly, one is helped to lodge himself close to God. If the body remains light because of abstaining from food, it helps in the 'upavāsa' in the form of service to God by the senses to God.

P.V. Kāṇḍe, a well known critic says, "The principle of fasting on *Ekādaśī* is spiritual in nature. It is a discipline of the mind. A fast observed willingly with enthusiasm and happiness removes the beastly feelings from the mind and makes it capable of receiving the grace of god." But he has not explained how it happens. But it is indeed commendable that he notes that fasting should be undertaken with enthusiasm.

On the whole, it should be importantly remembered that fasting is a means like *jāgaraṇa* for the purpose of worship of God and *Yoga*, and not an end in itself.

In this very sense, *Mahātmās* have preached thus - "Don't be a slave to fasting. Use it as your

servant and make it a ladder to ascend to the divine *Bhāva*."

While praising the glory of *Śrīmadbhāgavatam*, the *Padmapurāṇa* says, "If fasting becomes a hindrance to listen to the stories of God, it is not good. Comparably, the food that helps a person to listen to the glory of God, is commendable". This should be remembered in this context.

भोजनं तु वरं मन्ये कथाश्रवणकारकम्

Some people deride "It is ludicrous to advise Indians to fast. Because most of the people have to generally fast due to lack of food. It amounts to cruelty to advise them to remain hungry as they can get only a small quantity of food some how."—This is incorrect because if someone stays hungry due to lack of food, displeasure, ostentation etc., it can never be an *upavāsa* endorsed by the *śāstras*.

2) Who should not observe fast?

Those who feel weak mentally or those who happen to suffer from ill-health due to fasting, should not observe fast at all. Scriptures clearly state that it amounts to sin, if children below the age of eight years, old people above eighty, patients whose life span gets reduced because of fasting, and pregnant women observe fast. And if people whose body conditions get disturbed due to fasting and

consequently tend to think only of food instead of focussing on God, they will not benefit by fasting.

The *śāstras* also say that going on fast for no reason amounts to an act of offence against God. Because, by that the share of *Havis* which should reach the deities such as *prāṇa* etc would be missed by them. And, on days when exhaustion is caused because of inevitable physical work, fasting should not be done. Also, fasting is not a must for those who are in some distinct paths of *Yoga*. By excessive fasting they may encounter hindrances in their *sādhana*. Fasting need not be forced on such people. It need not be enforced also on great souls who are *Brahmasiddhas* and who are always immersed in *Ātmasantoshā* which happens to be the ultimate benefit of fasting. They have, in this regard, the right to act according to the dictates of their inner self. **We humbly remember here the command of Śrīraṅgamahāguru who said—"Instructions such as "Take the medicine. Follow the diet. Don't consume curds" etc., are meant for the sick. Healthy persons need not be bound by them. But even a healthy person may follow them to set a good example for the world."** Also, we are reminded of the words of *Dharmaśāstras* which say "One should not come to a conclusion based merely as the words of *śāstras*. If the judgement happens to

be devoid of reasoning, it results in *Dharmahāni* only

केवलं शास्त्रमाश्रित्य न कर्तव्यो विनिर्णयः ।
युक्तिहीने विचारे तु धर्महानिः प्रजायते''॥

3) What may be done by weak persons?

What should weak persons do on the day of observance of religious fasting? Those who cannot afford to fast for the whole day, may observe a partial fast. They may eat during the day and fast at night or vice versa. Both are approved by the *śāstras*. This option pertaining to the observance of the relevant *vrata* may be followed by a person depending upon his physical and mental dispositions.

Those who cannot observe complete fast may take light food. But the food thus taken should be *sāttvik* in nature. And even such a food should be taken in a small quantity, taking care to see that it will not impede the worship of God. *Śāstras* say that such persons can take water, milk, fruits, curds, ghee, bulbous roots, sweet potato or *haviṣhyānna* etc. Uncooked food items may be taken in a limited quantity. The food thus taken should not cause intoxication but should make the body and mind feel light. We come across advices which suggest that direct rice preparations should not be taken but preparations made from modified rice (i.e. rice in

the fried or broken form) can be consumed in a limited quantity. But, taking advantages of this concession, some people heavily consume many kinds of foods and *citrānnas* (spicy rice mixes), drink a variety of beverages, and yet feel they have observed *upavāsavrata*. An adage in kannada "*Annakke mūru mānavādare appaccige āru māna*" (It is three measures for rice but six for tiffins) is superbly proved by them! The *Phalāhāra vrata* of such people is indeed a *vrata* of *halavu Āhāra* (kannada - *Many foods*). A skit goes like this: A person asks the other 'who is that, seated behind the heap of *uppittu*? (cooked broken wheat cereal). "I am *Subbiah* here. Don't you know that I am observing *Ekādāśī vrata*"? This counter question itself served as the answer. No wonder, satires such as:

"*Āce mane subbammanorge Ekādāśī Upavāsa
Ello svalpa tintārante Uppittu Avalakki pāyasa!*"
have come up.

(A Kannada poem which means *Subbamma*, the neighbour is observing a fast on account of *Ekādāśī*. She eats something very little; cooked wheat cereal, flattened rice and *payasa*).

(This is the grandeur of just the breakfast on *Ekādāśī*!)

No need to explain that pompous *phalāhāras* like these are unscriptural. But, taking medicine and, following the words of a *Jnāni* (to take some food), do not amount to breaking of the vow of *Ekādāśī*)

अष्टैतान्यव्रतघ्नानि आपोमूलं घृतं पयः ।

हविः ब्राह्मणकाम्या च गुरोर्वचनमौषधम् ॥

If one follows as per the advice of an *Acārya* who is a *Jnānavijnāna trptātma*, he shall obtain the grace of god. Medication leads to good health. As both of these happen to be the benefits and limbs of religious fasting, *śāstras* advise as said above.

1. Rules that are helpful in fasting

Those who observe fast should also observe strict *brahmacarya*. Their minds, words and deeds should be pure. It is best to observe total silence on that day. We wish to quote an instance where a person happened to cause the spread of an unsavoury effect by indulging in loose talk, without caring to follow a rule of this *vrata* called *Mouna*. (silence)

A few boys were having meals on an *Ekādāśī*. An elderly person beaming with happiness resulting from a heavy *phalāhāra*, happened to come there. Enjoying both the sight and the smell of the meals which the boys were having, he quoted a line from the *Dharma śāstra* and chided. "You are eating a

meal on an *Ekādaśī* and it amounts to eating dog poop,” and created a disgusting feeling both in the mind of the boys and in his own *prakṛti* (disposition).

We have come across some ignoble practices in some houses where fasting is observed, such as abstaining from taking the daily bath till evening on the day of *Ekādaśī* because of the fear of the very thought of food after bath, indulging in reading stories and novels which abound in wordly *bhāvas* instead of listening to the stories of God, and reproaching others etc. No need to emphasise that these have to be totally given up.

Ekādaśī is a highly sacred *Mahāparva*. One should worship Lord *Nārāyaṇa* both internally and externally on that day. We feel that acts like abstaining from food or limited intake of food as per the guidelines of the *śāstras* and observing *jāgaraṇa* which facilitate such a worship, conform to the *śāstras*.

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says –

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।
रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥

(A person, who observes *upavāsa* without providing food for his body, mind and the senses, gets freed from *śabda* (sensation of sound) and *sparśa* (sensation of touch) and other sensations;

but *Rasa* (desire) for worldly pleasure does not leave him. When he visualizes God, even that desire leaves him).

Therefore it is good to keep our sense organs away from the objects of their desire on *Ekādaśī*, and make them fast. And, rather than just stopping at that, if one meditates on god and visualises him, even the desire for the worldly pleasures dries up. Such a person refuge in god who is a *Paramānanda Rasasvarūpi* (An embodiment of the essence of highest bliss). For the sake of the achievement of such a *paramapurushārtha* (the greatest goal of life), fasting should be done on that day.

