

## Sattila 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.