

MADHAVA-TITHI: MOTHER OF PREMA BHAKTI

[Tomorrow, July 2, 2009 is Ekadasi. The following is a lecture that Srila Narayana Maharaja gave in February 1997 in Murwilumbah, Australia. This is the first time that it is being published on the internet.]

Today is Ekadasi-vrata, and I think that most of you have observed it. To observe Ekadasi fully, like Ambarisa Maharaja, is very rare. We should try, but we are influenced by this present age, Kali-yuga.

Maharaja Ambarisa lived in Satya-yuga, and he was so strong that he could have fasted for one year, without sleep, standing on one leg, without even drinking water or breathing air. In Kali-yuga we are neither strong nor advanced; but we are fortunate. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has explained that on Ekadasi if we are hungry, we may take some fruit, juice, or milk. We should not eat continually. It is not that we drink a liter of one type of juice, and half an hour later another type of juice, and again within half an hour we take boiled potatoes and other vegetables, then after half an hour a large drink of water, a pound of paneer with sugar, and another half liter of rabari. We should eat only as much as is needed to allay sleep and idleness.

Remaining awake day and night, we should spend Ekadasi chanting and remembering Sri Krsna, as Ambarisa Maharaja did. He was the emperor of the whole world, a householder, and he was externally entangled in material attachments. Durvasa Muni was a brahmana and a realized yogi. He could curse someone to die, and also bring a dead man back to life. He was a brahmarsi, a brahmavadi with great powers. He thought: "I am bom in a brahminical family and am in the dynasty of Sankara (Siva). I am a manifestation of Sankara, the son of Atri and Anasuya, who are highly learned uttama-bhakta Vaisnavas. My parents gave so many teachings to Sita-devi, who is Laksmi herself, when She and Rama visited my parents' cottage. I am the greatest and most powerful man in this world; I can do anything within a moment." However, Durvasa Muni never observed Ekadasi.

Once, in his palace in Madhuvana, Mathura, Ambarisa Maharaja observed maha-dvadasi, neither drinking water nor sleeping. He absorbed himself throughout the day and night in chanting, remembering, serving the Deities, and praying. The next day, after worshipping Sri Krsna, when he was almost ready to break his fast, Durvasa Muni arrived at his palace.

Durvasa was like a god, a realized brahmavadi, but he had not observed Ekadasi .

Ambarisa Maharaja requested him to break Ekadasi by taking maha-dvadasi parana, after which he himself would honor prasada. Durvasa Muni replied, “Yes, but first I will take bath nearby in the Yamuna River. I won’t be very long.”

He delayed for such a long time, however, that only a few minutes were left before the auspicious time for breaking Ekadasi would be over. Ambarisa Maharaja wondered what to do. He thought, “A brahmana-rsi, a siddha mahayogi, has come to my door. He is not an ordinary person. I should respect him by offering him mahaprasada before I myself take it. Otherwise, I will be neglecting Indian culture, and I may possibly go to hell. On the other hand, I must observe my Ekadasi-vrata, which is not a worldly activity. It is transcendental, and if I fail to observe it by not taking maha-prasada at the proper time, I may lose my bhakti. Should I honor this brahmana, or honor bhakti?”

After careful consideration, he chose to honor bhakti. “I cannot act against bhakti in any way, even if I lose some material prosperity or go to hell. I will not disrespect Ekadasi; I will break it within the prescribed time.” He then drank a drop of water that had been used in the worship of Sri Krsna, called caranamrta.

If one observes Ekadasi without taking juice or water, he can break the fast by taking caranamrta. But if water, fruit, juice, milk, or vegetables have been taken, one will have to break it by taking some grain; otherwise his Ekadasi is not complete.

Ambarisa Maharaja thought, “I have not taken even water during my observance of Ekadasi, so I can take caranamrta. In this way, because I will not have taken any grains, I will also be respecting the brahmana.”

After taking a drop of caranamrta, Durvasa Muni returned. “I know you, He shouted. “You are only a so-called bhakta. I am a siddha (perfect mystic) brahmana. You know my parentage. You know of my great powers, and yet you have dared to dishonor me. I will immediately bum you to ashes.”

He took one dreadlock from his hair, dashed it to the ground, and ordered it to become a buming fire. The fire demon then ran towards Ambarisa Maharaja in an attempt to bum him to ashes. At that moment the Sudarsana cakra appeared there. Sri Krsna had ordered His cakra to always protect the Vaisnavas, persons who have taken shelter of Him, so Sudarsana bumed to ashes the fiery demon and then moved toward Durvasa rsi, who fled, ‘taking his legs on his head.’⁷ Durvasa Rsi then cried out, “Save me! Save me! Save me!”

When the fire demon had approached Ambarisa Maharaja, the king chanted and was fearless. He thought, “Whether I live or die depends on Sri Krsna.” He depended fully on

Sri Krsna, and Sudarsana cakra saved him. Durvasa Muni, however, though a powerful brahmana and realized yogi, feared death and fled. He tried first to take shelter of his father, Lord Siva; but seeing him approach, Lord Siva called out to him, “Don’t come here. Go from here! I know why you are running. You are in this predicament because you have dishonored a Vaisnava. I know how influential Vaisnavas are and I fear offending them. If I give you shelter, Sudarsana will also attack me.”

Durvasa Muni then went to Lord Brahma, who also refused to help him. After that he approached Lord Visnu and prayed, “O Visnu! O Visnu! Save me from Your weapon. I am taking shelter of You.”

⁷ “Taking his legs on his head” is a Hindi expression to illustrate one who flees at lightning speed.

Lord Visnu said, “I am powerless to protect you. I have no freedom. I am bound to My bhaktas. They have given their hearts to Me, and I have given Mine to them. I am in no way independent of My devotees.”

Sri-bhagavan uvaca

aham bhakta-paradhino
hy asvatantra iva dvija sadhubhir
grasta-hrdayo bhaktair
bhakta jana-priyah

[“The Supreme Personality of Godhead said to the brahmana: “I am completely under the control of My devotees. Indeed, I am not at all independent. Because My devotees are completely devoid of material desires, I sit only within the cores of their hearts. What to speak of My devotee, even those who are devotees of My devotee are very dear to Me.” [Srimad-Bhagavatam, 9.4.63]

If someone gets a thorn in his foot, that thorn cannot be removed from his head. It must be removed from his foot. So Lord Visnu is saying, “The Vaisnavas are everything to Me. It is My vow to protect them. If you want to be saved, you must go at once to Ambarisa Maharaja. Do not see him as a family man or an ordinary ksatriya king. Do not think ‘Oh, he is nothing.’ He is My heart. Offer him your obeisances.”

Worldly persons tend to think, “I am so learned, rich, and powerful. These bogus Vaisnavas are useless and only chant Hare Krsna, doing nothing of value.” Do not behave like this. Rather, become an actual, sincere Vaisnava. Then, Sri Krsna will protect you

and bestow upon you krsna-prema.

On the Lord's order, Durvasa Rsi immediately returned to Maharaja Ambarisa. Durvasa begged, "Please save me from the Sudarsana cakra. His heat is burning me." Ambarisa then prayed, "O Prabhu, O Lord, if I have ever performed devotional service to Sri Krsna, then please save this brahmana." No sooner were these words spoken than the Sudarsana cakra became cool and returned to Lord Visnu.

Ever since Durvasa Rsi had begun fleeing from the Lord's weapon one year earlier, Ambarisa Maharaja had not eaten anything. In fact, when he finally came before Ambarisa Maharaja, the king apologized to him with great humility. He said, "I am nothing—I am not a devotee. I have neglected and dishonored you by breaking my fast." Durvasa Muni fell flat at the lotus feet of Ambarisa Maharaja, who embraced him.

Ambarisa Maharaja asked him to be merciful and honor maha-prasada. Durvasa then expressed his new realization, that bhaktas are more powerful than Krsna Himself. Krsna has given all of His power to the Vaisnavas. But they hide this and 'cheat' others, presenting themselves as fallen persons. *Trnad api sunicena*. Although they are extremely powerful, they are also meek and humble, generous and polite."

Durvasa Rsi gladly took maha-prasada, after which Ambarisa Maharaja also honored prasada along with his whole family.

So be like that: humble, with strong faith in devotional service to Sri Krsna and ekadasi. We can give our head, life, and soul to observe Ekadasi. Ekadasi will protect us, for she is the mother of prema-bhakti

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has written: *madhava tithi bhakti janani jatane palana kori*. Ekadasi is madhava-tithi, Krsna Himself. Holy days like Ekadasi are bhakti janani, the mother of prema-bhakti. We should try to follow it as purely as possible, not eating and drinking many times throughout the day.

If possible, observe it without even drinking water (nirjala), or take a little prasada once in the day if this is not possible. Many old people, who are lean and thin, can observe nirjala Ekadasi ; so why not those of you who are young and strong? Try to observe it like this. However, if by such fasting your head pains and you go to sleep, then what is the use? Try to remember Krsna, associate with Vaisnavas, read the Vedic scriptures, and offer prayers day and night.

One such prayer is:

Deleted:

