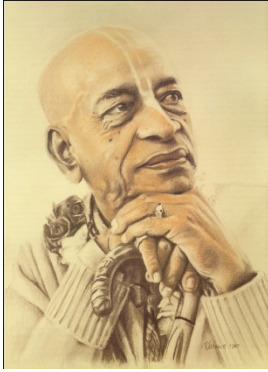


International Society for Kåñëa Consciousness
Founder-Acarya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



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Nirjala Ekadasi

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1. *The Story of Nirjala Ekādaṣé*

The story goes like that Bhima had difficulty observing Ekādaṣé because another name of Bhima is *Brikodar*, *Brika* means wolf and *odar* means belly. The wolves are famous for being hungry so Bhima is very famous for his appetite, ravenous appetite like a wolf. Bhima when they were in disguise and they were hiding in Ekachakra dhama as wondering Brahmanas, they used to maintain themselves by begging and when they would collect the food half of it used to go to Bhima and the rest shared by all the other brothers and Mother Kunti. So Bhima is very fond of eating therefore Bhima used to find it difficult to observe Ekādaṣé like most of us. He asked Vyasadev what should he do, then Vyasadev actually gave this consideration to Bhima that at least one Ekādaṣé this Nirjala Ekādaṣé you fast and by fasting this Nirjala Ekādaṣé you get the benefit of fasting all the other Ekādaṣés. Just one Ekādaṣé a year will give you the benefit of fasting all the Ekādaṣés in a year. Even one should do achamana very carefully even achamana can be a drinking water so one should very careful just taking a few drops of water on the palm and doing the achamana. Caritāmāta also be should take just a few drops like the point is one should not take advantage of doing achamana to drink water or like drink a glass full of caritāmāta and saying well we taking caritāmāta. So that is the Nirjala Ekādaṣé. The way Ekādaṣé is meant to be fasted or observed is as I said one should abstain from even water and food, fasting completely. So when one fasts for the twenty four hours like that from sunrise to sunrise or from Brahma murat to Brahma Murat then one gets the full benefit. When one fasts for the whole day and eats something after sunset he gets half the benefit of Ekādaṣé. When one eats at midday one gets quarter of the benefit of Ekādaṣé. We should be very careful Ekādaṣé is the arrangement of the Supreme Personality of Godhead to free us from our sinful reactions so we should make it a point to take full advantage of this opportunity that the Lord has created for us, so this is the special purpose of observing Nirjala Ekādaṣé. *Nir* means no and *jala* means water so Nirjala means fasting even from water so that is the way one is meant to fast.

↓ Ekādaṣé is the eleventh day of the movement of the moon

Now I will go to the Ekādaṣé in general. See Ekādaṣé means eleventh so the eleventh day of the movement of the moon. Vedic calculation is according to the movement of the moon whereas the western calculation is according to movement of the sun. So according to Vedic calculation the moon goes from full moon to new moon and then again from new moon to full moon. These are known as two *pakshas* or two wings or sections of the movement of the moon. It goes from

new moon, it begins from first day, second day, third day. Its counted like *pratma* or *pratipad*, *ditiya*, *tritiya*, *caturti*, *panchami*, *sasti*, *saktami*, *asmi*, *naumi*, *dasami*, *dasami* means ten, *Ekādaṣé*, *Ekādaṣé* means eleven, *Dwadasi*, *Triyodasi* and *Caturdasi*, the fourteenth day. Then it comes to the full moon *purnima*. So, in this way fifteen days waxing period of the moon and fifteen days waning period of the moon so in this way a month is consisting of thirty days. So thirty days a month divided into two *pakshas* consisting of fifteen days each and the eleventh day is called Ekādaṣé. So there are two narrations of the appearance of Ekādaṣé.

↓ The story of Ekādaṣé *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*
The one narration is from *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* so this goes like when the Lord created, along with creation also came sin people started to act in a wrong way and as a result of that they would accrue sin so with all the sin a personality appeared, all the sins personified in the form of *Papapurusa* so this *Papapurusa* is the personality who is responsible for giving punishment or miseries afflicting living entities with the sinful activities. The body of the *Papapurusa* is generated from different types of sinful activities. Like a killing of a brahmana causes the head of the *Papapurusa*, taking intoxication causes the eyes of *Papapurusa*, stealing gold causes the mouth of *Papapurusa*, having sexual intercourse with the wife of the guru causes the ears of *Papapurusa*, killing of one's wife cause the nose of *Papapurusa*, killing cows causes the arms of *Papapurusa*, stealing wealth cause the neck of *Papapurusa* and abortion causes the chest of *Papapurusa*. So in this way you can see how the different sinful activities are giving rise to the body of *Papapurusa*. Along with that Krishna also created Yamarāja. Yamarāja is meant to charge living entities according to their sinful and pious activities. So when the living entity dies according to his sinful activities he is judged by Yamarāja. The Yamadūtas takes the living entity there, the gross body dies but the subtle body remains and the subtle body is the embodiment of one's karmic reactions. The way we act that gives shape to our subtle body. So at the time of death the living entities who are very sinful and attached to their gross body to their material existence they do not want to leave their body then the Yamadūtas comes with noose and whips in their hands and put the noose around the neck of the subtle body of the living entity and drag him out of the body. He doesn't want to come out of the body so they whip him. In one hand they are putting a noose around his neck, they pull him and they beat him with the whip. So this is how they drag the subtle body out of the gross body. The living entities who were very attached. Devotees don't have to worry about that because the devotees have taken shelter of Krishna the Yamadūtas won't come to them. Yamarāja advises the Yamadūtas that they should never go near the devotees. Even if Yamadūtas come and even if devotees are taken to Yamarāja, to the abode of Yamarāja, the devotees will not be afraid because the devotees will be delighted to see Yamarāja one of the twelve Mahājānas so devotees will be delighted to have

the darshan of Yamarāja and offer obeisances to him and naturally Yamarāja will also treat them in a different way. Generally living entities are dragged out of their material gross body and taken to the abode of Yamarāja and Yamarāja there judges the living entities according to their activities. Yamarāja has a clerk his name is Chitragupta and he records all the activities of all the living entities. Apparently it may seem impossible how can one person keep record of all the activities of all the living entities. But nowadays we have seen the activities of people are being recorded in computers databases and all their details are there. Like if a simple computer where a human being can keep records of so many people what to speak of Yamarāja's clerk Chitragupta who is especially empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We should be very careful how we act because all our activities will be recorded and sinful activities are liable to punishment and because of that we may be dragged to Yamarāja's abode and there we will be charged and punished. So in Yamarāja's abode (*Yamalaya*) the sinners are punished and one day Krishna when to Yamarāja's abode as we know Yamarāja is one of the Mahājanas, great devotees of the Lord, so Krishna visited Yamarāja and he was very pleased to greet Krishna, he washed His feet, offered *padya* and *argya*, *asana* to sit down and he worshipped Him, offered Him *bhoga* and at that time Krishna heard inhuman cries of agony coming from the Southern side of *Yamalaya* so He asked Yamarāja "what is happening? Why do I hear these cries of agony? So then Yamarāja told Him, "This is where the sinners are being punished due to their sinful reactions." Krishna wanted to see and He saw the various kinds of punishments, the living entities are being tortured in a terrible way due to their sinful activities. Krishna decided that they are my creation, my creatures and they are suffering so I must do something to alleviate their suffering condition, to free them from their suffering condition. So Krishna right there created a personality a beautiful young woman and she is Ekādaṣe, Krishna's internal potency, Krishna made arrangements that if anybody observes Ekādaṣe on this particular day which is the eleventh day which she was created he will become free from all sinful reactions. Krishna in this way makes various arrangements to free the living entities from the sinful reaction. Like in Bhagavad Gita also he made this arrangement *Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ caraṇam vraja* give up all yourso called pious religious activities, so called duties/responsibilities and just surrender unto Me then I will deliver you from all your sinful reactions, So similarly, Ekādaṣe is another arrangement of Krishna to free the living entities from the sinful reactions. *Sarva-dharmān parityajya* may not be possible but observing Ekādaṣi is easy. Just observe Ekādaṣi and you will be free from all your sinful reactions. So in this way Krishna made this arrangement and this was also projected through saintly personalities who were very compassionate and who also want to help living entities to become free from sinful reactions. So when Krishna made this arrangement is was broadcasted all over the universe.

Just observe Ekādaṣe the eleventh day of the lunar movement and you will become from all your sinful reactions. So in this way people just started to become free from their sinful reactions. Now because there was no sin, sin personified *Papapurusa*, he was dying so one day Krishna saw that sin was staggering towards Him and He asked him, "Why are you in this kind of condition? So sin said, "Look my Lord You are my creator also so You have the responsibility to maintain me but unfortunately for me the day You created the Ekādaṣi since then all the living entities are observing Ekādaṣi and becoming free from sinful reaction and as a result of that just see my condition there is no sin in the universe so my existence is becoming practically terminated, therefore please do something for me to survive." So then Krishna said, "Okay from now on all the sins on the Ekādaṣi day will enter into the grains and beans." Now grains actually means the things that grow from plants, when the crops become ripe then the plant dies so that is the definition of grains. The plants when the harvest is ripe it automatically dies. So wheat, rice, maize, barley, corn, all these fall into this category, even the pulses like dhal, beans, beans also notice when they ripe the plant dies. So, this day the day of Ekādaṣi Krishna made the arrangement for *Papapurusa* that all the sins will enter into grains and those who take grains on that day although they may not have physically committed those sins they will liable to those sinful reactions so that is why on Ekādaṣi days we so strictly observe so that we do not take grains or beans. Taking the grains on that day one will be taking the sins although they have not committed the sins. Therefore the devotees are very careful on the Ekādaṣi day the devotees don't even take maha prasadam although the maha prasadam is free from sinful reaction, free from any karmic reactions and still devotees don't even take maha prasadam also on that day. The devotees should be very careful not to take grains and beans on that day. So that is the appearance of Ekādaṣe and why we abstain from grains and beans.

↓ Ekādaṣe is also known as *Harivāsar*

Now this Ekādaṣe is also known as *Harivāsar*, *Hari* means Supreme Personality of Godhead and *vāsar* means day. The day of Hari. This day is so dear to Hari that it is considered to be His day. Therefore observing Ekādaṣe immensely pleases the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna. There is another narration of the appearance of Ekādaṣe, that is there was a demon called Mura. Mura demon was so powerful that he defeated all the demi-gods Indra, Candra, Varuna, .all these different demi-gods were defeated by Mura demon, he drove them out of the heavenly planet. He assumed the control of the universe. Actually demi-gds take care of different universal affairs like rising of the sun, rising of the moon, controlling the wind, controlling the air, controlling rain so these are the universal affairs controlled by the demi-gods. Now Mura drove them out which is their place of residence and he took over the heavenly planet and being completely distort the demi-gods approached Lord Ćiva and asked him what they should do, this particular demon has driven them out so

they asked Him to help them. Lord Çiva expressed his inability and said, "Look, I can't do anything but you can go to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Jaganatha Lord of the Universe go to Him and tell Him to do something about it." So when the demi-gods went to Narayana, Jaganatha, to pray to Him to please do something about this and when Narayana heard that He became very very angry. He said, "Who dares to interfere in my arrangement?" The demi-gods controlling the different elements in nature is actually Krishna's arrangement so to disregard that arrangement is to disregard Krishna. So Krishna was very upset and He said, "Okay you all pick up your weapons and where is the Mura demon?" So they went to his abode and attacked him and Mura was extremely powerful and he was also supported by millions of other *asuras* demons and when the demi-gods attacked them Mura becoming very angry he counter attacked and the demi-gods ran away. These demons attacked the only person that was standing there was Hari, Narayana. Narayana at that time just released His weapons and millions of arrows were coming out of his bow killed all those demons and at that time Mura decided to confront Him so that is the Vedic way of fighting. The leaders don't fight at the beginning they send the less powerful ones to fight and then greater and greater strength comes and so finally Mura was the only one left. So Mura started to fight and to His great surprise the Lord saw that His weapons were not being effective. So then they started to fight with bear hands wrestling and they fought for a long long time. Still Mura could not be defeated and finally becoming exhausted the Lord retreated to Badarikāçrama and he went to a cave called Himavati to take rest. Hima means snow a huge cave with only one entrance covered in snow and ice. The Lord fell asleep there and at that time Mura entered there after chasing the Lord but the Lord was sleeping so Mura thought he could take advantage and kill my enemy Hari. So when Mura was about to attack the sleeping Lord then a beautiful young woman appeared from the body of the Lord. She stopped Mura and they fought. Mura's weapons were totally ineffective to this young girl and all of his weapons were exhausted and Mura just came to attack this woman with bear hands. Another law of Vedic way of fighting if the enemy doesn't have a weapon then they drop their weapon and fight with bear hands. Naturally this young girl was going to fight hand to hand with Mura, with her razor sharp weapon she cut the head off Mura and killed him. So when the Lord woke up He saw Mura's head body there and this beautiful woman so He asked, "Who are you?" She narrated the whole story to the Lord and the Lord said, "Even I could not defeat this demon and you have defeated him so ask for any boon." She said, "Give me the boon that from now on that whoever on this vow of austerity, observes fasting, abstaining from frivolous talks, bathing and worshipping the Lord and staying up the whole night, singing the glory of the Lord, he will become free from all sinful reactions." The Lord granted that boon and He also told her "Since you have appeared on this day of Ekādaçi therefore you will be

identified as Ekādaçi your name will be Ekādaçi." This is how Ekādaçi began and this is the first Ekādaçi called *Utpanna ekādaçé Utpanna* meaning generated or produced because she appeared on this day in this month of November it is known as *Utpanna ekādaçé*.

So observe this Ekādaçi very nicely and take advantage of this wonderful arrangement that Krishna made.

The twenty six Ekadasis are known as *Utpanna, Mokshada, Saphala, Putrada, Sat-Tila, Bhaimi, Vijaya, Amalaki, Papamochani, Kamada, Varuthini, Mohini, Aparā, Nirjala, Yogini, Sayana, Kamika, Pavitropāna, Annada, Parsva, Indira, Papankusha, Rama and Utthana*. Purushotam has two more Ekādaçi known as *Padmini and Parama*. So this is how there are twenty six Ekādaçis. Hare Krishna. So observe this Ekādaçi very nicely and take advantage of this wonderful arrangement that Krishna made. Just observe one day Ekādaçi every fortnight and the benefit you will derive from that is inconceivable especially today Nirjala Ekādaçi. Fast from water observe it properly and you will get the benefit of observing Ekādaçi and medically also it is said that fasting twice a month is very good for health because this way your digestive system gets complete rest. Generally we not only eat we overeat and that excess food becomes toxins when the food that is not digested in the stomach becomes toxic then this toxins in the body give rise to various diseases. When we fast then our fire of digestion burns out whatever food was there from previous days in the stomach and then it starts to burn the poisons and toxins in the body. Therefore fasting is a very good detox process so in this way clinically we can also see that it has its own benefit. It's not that we should fast for physical well being but the point is that while we are deriving spiritual benefit physically also there is benefit. Although the purpose is to derive spiritual benefit we can also derive the physical, material benefits. Thank you very much. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

2. Questions and Answers

↓ What if someone cannot do Nirjala Ekādaçi today?

Try to observe the other twenty three Ekādaçis properly or wait for the next Nirjala Ekādaçi.

↓ In Puri they don't observe Ekādaçi what should we do when we are here?

There is a saying that Jaganatha Puri is such a holy place and one doesn't need to observe Ekādaçi but on Ekādaçi there is a big rush in Jaganatha Puri that they don't have to observe Ekādaçi. Bhaktisiddanta Sarasvaté Öhākura did not approve of that mentality. He said our business is to please the Lord not take advantage of the Lord. Some loopholes. As I mentioned like although maha prasadam is free from sinful reactions and Jaganatha Puri is the place where there is no need to observe Ekādaçi but still you observe Ekādaçi because its *Harivāsar*. It is a day which is very dear to the Lord and for the pleasure of the Lord we

observe not for any other business our business is simply to please the Lord.

↓ How can one be free from acquiring fruits from pious deeds and subsequently enjoy Krishna bhakti?

Very good. Actually piety has not been mentioned in this respect because pious activities everyone wants to enjoy. Generally people want to enjoy, people don't want to suffer, sin gives suffering so they want to get rid of sin but piety gives enjoyment so everybody wants to enjoy so they do not want to get rid of their piety. In the long run both sin and piety is on the bodily platform therefore they are in ignorance because the bodily platform prevents us from becoming Krishna Conscious. Like even if there are pious activities we offer it in the form of service to Lord. Example when a devotee gets wealth what does he do? He uses it in the service of Krishna. Due to pious activity one becomes famous what does he do? He uses his fame in glorifying the Supreme Personality of Godhead and spreading Krishna Consciousness. Due to pious activity one gets a beautiful body so this beautiful body becomes attractive to others so he uses his body to promote Krishna Consciousness. So in this way whatever pious result is there a devotee uses that in the service of Krishna that is a devotee. He doesn't remain attached to either the suffering or enjoyment that is the attitude of a devotee. In happiness and in distress, in profit and loss, in victory or defeat he remains unperturbed because he simply takes shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord.

↓ If one follows all the Ekādaṣis strictly what is the value of following this one strictly?

Well if you are observing all of them so strictly then you observe this one also so strictly that goes without saying but the point is if you cannot observe the other Ekādaṣis so strictly at least observe this Ekādaṣi strictly. If you are observing all the other twenty five Ekādaṣis strictly then you will naturally observe this one also strictly. The logic cannot be I will observe all other Ekādaṣi strictly but not this one.

↓ Sometimes due to fasting Nirjala Ekadasi it becomes difficult to attend the mangala aarti morning programme on the next day how do we balance both?

Well, try to attend but if you can't what can be done. If you stay up the whole night attend the managala aarti then go to sleep.

↓ When should we take water after 12am or after sunrise?

Fasting meaning until the next morning and by the way the break fast times are there for example from 5.41am to 10.13am. In Vaishnava calendar we get break fast time for your location so try to break your fast so drink water after observing the day of Ekādaṣi and at the time of break fast you can drink some water.

↓ What do you do when its Ekādaṣi fast today and the next day Vaman Dwadasi fast?

The thing is when Ekādaṣi and Dwadasi come one after the other then the day of Ekādaṣi fasting covers the next day's fast. Like for example we have occasions like

that Varaha Dwadasi and Vaman Dwadasi so we are meant to observe fasting on Vaman Dwadasi so what we do is we fast the Vaman Dwadasi on the Ekādaṣi day because we cannot fast for two days because fasting also involves breaking the fast. So when you breaking the fast you can't fast you have already broken the fast so that is why the fasting is observed on the day of Ekādaṣi.

↓ If we follow Ekādaṣi strictly according to Srila Prabhupada's instructions will the family members who have not taken initiation attain any benefit?

Yes some benefit they derive no doubt but its better that they fast also.

↓ Which is the best attitude of observing fasting?

The best attitude of observing fasting is to give pleasure to Krishna. We are doing it simply to please Krishna. This is a day we must spend our time in glorification of Krishna by chanting His Holy Name, worshipping Him and other such activities.

↓ We have to fast from Brahma murat to Brahma murat so can we eat food before?

Yes, good point. The way to observe fasting has been described you eat on Dasami day at the time of sunset but don't eat after that Not if 4.30am Brahma murat is starting so at 4.15am I will take a big meal. No. Generally its not a twenty four hour fast but a thirty six hour fast. The latest time you can take food is the day before at sunset.

↓ Sometimes we see devotees taking maha prasadam on Ekādaṣi should they strictly not take even if the health is bad?

If the health is bad they should fast even more, if the health is bad why should one eat? Especially grains on Ekādaṣi that cannot be an excuse at all. Rather it is better to fast when one is sick because fasting is good for health.

↓ Krishna is responsible for everything so why was He pretending that He did not know what was happening in the hellish planet?

It is His pastimes so sometimes Krishna acts in such a way that He did not know because if He acted as all knowing then there would not be any room for pastimes. If Krishna acts as the Supreme Personality of Godhead all the time then the demons won't be there for Him to fight with therefore Krishna takes that role He has to give pleasure to the devotees.

3. Srila Prabhupada appreciation

Prabhupada's general attitude was very compassionate so therefore Prabhupada made it a point that devotees can take prasadam but fast from grains and beans on Ekādaṣi.

Always live in ISKCON and never leave ISKCON because ISKCON is the lotus feet of Srila Prabhupada. Serve Srila Prabhupada your whole life.

4. Guru Maharaja's Instructions:

- ↓ We should be very careful Ekādaṣé is the arrangement of the Supreme Personality of Godhead to free us from our sinful reactions so we should make it a point to take full advantage of this opportunity that the Lord has created for us, so this is the special purpose of observing Nirjala Ekādaṣé;
- ↓ Just observe Ekādaṣi and you will be free from all your sinful reactions;
- ↓ The devotees should be very careful not to take grains and beans on that day;
- ↓ So observe this Ekādaṣi very nicely and take advantage of this wonderful arrangement that Krishna made. Just observe one day Ekādaṣi every fortnight and the benefit you will derive from that is inconceivable especially today Nirjala Ekādaṣi. Fast from water observe it properly and you will get the benefit of observing Ekādaṣi;
- ↓ Therefore fasting is a very good detox process so in this way clinically we can also see that it has its own benefit. It's not that we should fast for physical well being but the point is that while we are deriving spiritual benefit physically also there is benefit;
- ↓ Our business is to please the Lord not take advantage of the Lord;
- ↓ Jaganatha Puri is the place where there is no need to observe Ekādaṣi but still you observe Ekādaṣi because it's *Harivāsar*. It is a day which is very dear to the Lord and for the pleasure of the Lord we observe;
- ↓ So in this way whatever pious result is there a devotee uses that in the service of Krishna. Krishna that is a devotee;
- ↓ He doesn't remain attached to either the suffering or enjoyment that is the attitude of a devotee; and
- ↓ In happiness and in distress, in profit and loss, in victory or defeat he remains unperturbed because he simply takes shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord.

(The content of this E-magazine was based on a lecture given by His Holiness Bhakti Charu Swami in Switzerland on Nirjala Ekādaṣi)

(Compilation & editing by Hemavati Radhika dasi)