

CHAPTER TWELVE

Uninterrupted Ekādaśī Vow

Devaśarmā said:

1. Your mind has thus suddenly turned towards Keśava. Hence my (? your) sins accumulated during hundreds of previous births have perished.

2. Without (performing) holy rites, without (visiting) Tīrthas (holy places), you have been liberated from crores of sins. Since you welcomed me with hospitality and devotion, you have attained the region of Hari.

3. It is on account of the power of that merit that your mind is thus inclined. I meditated and mentally pondered over it. Therefore, the acts of your previous births¹ have been known.

1. This is the second previous birth of King Vīrabāhu. As remarked on p. 240, fnt I, rebirth has been again used as a motif. But here it is used to describe the evil effects of observing Dvādaśī vow overlapped by Daśamī (v. 5) despite all the piety and religious behaviour of the Brāhmaṇa.

4. Once, in a previous birth, you were a Brāhmaṇa at Avantī. You were devoted to virtue and piety. You were in the habit of always studying the Vedas. You were of good conduct. You performed holy rites always.

5. Once you performed the Dvādaśī vow of Viṣṇu even though Daśamī overlapped it. As a result of that sin, all (your) merits perished.

6. Everything became futile like a Brāhmaṇa who is husband of a Śūdra woman. You underwent the tortures in hells for many thousands of years.

7-12. Hence many sinful things were committed by you for a long time. The Tithi of the noble-souled Viṣṇu was celebrated by you even when it was overlapped by Daśamī. Therefore you were born as a Śūdra and your mind was turned towards sinful activities. The mind that is defiled by the Daśamī overlapping Dvādaśī does not feel interested in virtue and piety.

O dear one, your daughter's son is in the city of Vidarbha. The Ekādaśī vow of Hari has been performed by him as laid down (in the scriptures).

The merit of the Akhaṇḍa Ekādaśī Vrata (uninterrupted Ekādaśī vow) was given (to you) by him. Therefore, your mind turned towards virtue and the sins were destroyed.

By the power of that merit as well as of the Ekādaśī vow, the sin of the overlapping Daśamī was written off by Yama. All the sins committed in the course of ten thousand births and the sin of this birth have been wiped off by Yama himself now.

13-16. Even as they both were conversing thus, Viṣvaksena came there: "O inferior one in caste, welcome to you. I, Janārdana, am pleased with you. As a result of your hospitality towards the Brāhmaṇa, your sin has been destroyed. By the merit offered by another resulting from the Ekādaśī Vrata, O Śūdra, your sin due to the overlapping of Daśamī has been destroyed. After performing the Vrata your grandson has offered you the merit. Therefore you have been redeemed. Along with your wife, O highly fortunate one, mount this Garuḍa."

After saying thus, you were placed on the aerial chariot by the Lord of the Devas.

17-18. From there you went to heaven on account of your Śūdrahood, O excellent king. Devaśarmā, the Brāhmaṇa, went to the great Tīrtha Prayāga. Thus everything that had been asked by you has been

recounted to you. Due to the merit of the Akhaṇḍa-Ekādaśī as well as to that of the hospitality, you got this wife endowed with devotion to Viṣṇu and the kingdom wherein all the enemies have been killed.

The king said:

19. O Brāhmaṇa, instruct me in the procedure of Akhaṇḍa-Ekādaśī for the sake of propitiating Viṣṇu. It behoves you to grant me your favour.

The sage said:

20. Listen, O tiger among kings, to the splendid procedure of Ekādaśī. This was formerly narrated by Lord Viṣṇu to Nārada.¹

21-25. I shall narrate that to you. I shall describe that splendid *Udyāpana* rite (valedictory rite after a Vrata). This splendid Vrata (named) Akhaṇḍa Ekādaśī Vrata should be performed on the Dvādaśī days, O excellent one among men, in Mārgaśīrṣa and other months.

On the Daśamī day he should have *Naktabhojana*. He should fast on the Ekādaśī day. On the Dvādaśī day he should take a single meal. This is called Akhaṇḍa. By the word *Nakta* we mean the eighth part of the day when the sun becomes very dim. Food is taken then and not at night.

One who is a devotee of Viṣṇu should avoid the following ten² on the Daśamī days: (meal in) bell-metal vessels, meat, Masūra pulse, Caṇakas (chickpea), grain called Kodravas (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*), greens, honey, other men's food, subsequent meal and sexual intercourse.

26-27. This procedure is for the Daśamī day. Listen to that of Ekādaśī. The devotee of Viṣṇu should avoid these ten on the Ekādaśī day: frequent drinking of water, violence, unclean habits, untruthfulness, chewing of betel leaves, twigs for brushing teeth, sleeping and having sexual intercourse during the day, playing game of dice, sleeping during night and conversation with fallen persons.

28. (He shall repeat this Mantra:) "Today I am not going to enjoy my wife, O Keśava. I will not be taking my food today. For the sake of propitiating you, O Lord of Devas, I maintain restraints day and night.

1. VV 21-66 describe in details the Akhaṇḍa Ekādaśī Vrata.

2. VV 25-27 and 31 give the list of restrictions to be observed on the Daśamī, Ekādaśī and Dvādaśī days.

29. With the sense-organs asleep, there is grief and distress. There is (restraint of) meal and sexual intercourse; food particles may stick to the space between the teeth. Forgive, O Puruṣottama.”

30. The word Upavāsa is usually interpreted as *Observance of fast*. But really it means: ‘He has refrained from sins and his stay is with (i.e. abides by) good qualities’. It should not be taken to mean withering away of the body.

31. Viṣṇu’s devotee should avoid on the Dvādaśī day the ten things mentioned before as well as *Parāṇna* (other men’s food) and *Madhu* (honey or liquor). He must avoid *Mardana* etc. (application of unguents etc.).

32-33. (He shall repeat this Mantra:): “Today I am observing the meritorious and sanctifying Dvādaśī. It is holy and destructive of sins. I shall break my fast; O Garuḍa-emblem Lord, be pleased. In order to propitiate Viṣṇu, I have resorted to restraints and observances. With your favour I shall feed an excellent Brāhmaṇa today.”

34. He should perform the holy rite in accordance with this procedure till the year is complete. When a year is completed the wise devotee should perform the rite of *Udyāpana*¹ (ie. conclusion of the Vrata).

35. It is to be remembered that the *Udyāpana* of the Vrata is at the beginning, middle as well as at the end. He who does not perform *Udyāpana* will become blind and leprous.

36-37. Hence the devotee should perform *Udyāpana* in accordance with his capacity and affluence. It is performed in the bright half of the splendid month of Mārgaśīrṣa after inviting twelve Brāhmaṇas who are experts in the procedure. The thirteenth one should be the *Ācārya* (Preceptor) who is also an expert in the injunctions. He should be invited along with his wife.

38. The sponsor of the Vrata should take his holy bath. He should be pure (in body and mind). He should have faith. He should have conquered his sense-organs. By washing their feet and offering them *Arghyas*, garments etc. he should duly honour the *Ācārya* and others.

39-41. The *Ācārya* then makes a mystic diagram of the shape of a discus, lotus or Sarvatobhadra, with splendid colour powders. He places there a pot covered with a white cloth. It should be full of water rendered fragrant with camphor and black aloewood. Five (different kinds of) precious stones and five tender sprouts are put into the pot.

1. VV 34-66 describe the procedure of *Udyāpana* (conclusion) of this Vrata. The Āgamic influence is obvious.

A copper pot is wrapped with a red cloth and flower garlands are also put round it. It is then placed upon the *Maṇḍala* (mystic diagram).

42-43. Above it the idol of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa should be placed, O king. The idol should be made of gold weighing one *Karṣa* (about half an ounce). It should have the vehicle and weapons. The height should be four *Angulas*. Or it may be made according to one's capacity, but it should not involve any financial fraud.

44. Then the *Mūrti* (idol) should be installed in the *Maṇḍala*. The overlord of all the twelve months should be worshipped for keeping the *Vrata* unbroken.

45. To the east of the *Maṇḍala* the Ācārya should place a splendid and auspicious conch: "O Pāñcajanya, formerly you were born of the ocean and were held by Viṣṇu in his hand. You had been created by all the Devas. Obeisance to you."

46. Thereafter he should make a raised ground as Altar to the north of the *Maṇḍala*. After the rite of *Saṅkalpa Havana* (oblations) should be offered along with Vaiṣṇava Mantras occurring in the Vedas.

47. He should install Viṣṇu in his own place. He should install Hari and worship him with *Puruṣasūkta* and the auspicious Mantras from *Purāṇas*.

48. Many kinds of sweetmeats should be made to be offered as *Naivedya*. After presenting *Dhūpa* (incense) and *Dīpa* (lights) and other offerings he should perform the rite of *Nirājana*.

49. After worshipping with *Yakṣakardama* [a mixture of camphor, agallochum, musk and *Kakkola* (a kind of plant the berry of which has a waxy and aromatic interior)] he should perform circumambulation along with the Brāhmaṇas reciting auspicious Mantras for the sake of welfare. Then, O king, prostration is to be done.

50. Thereupon, the Brāhmaṇas should perform *Japa*, the Ācārya doing it first, followed by others in the order. The *Sūktas* for *Japa* are *Pavamānīya*, *Madhusūkta* and *Maṇḍalabrāhmaṇa*.

51-52. The following Mantras should be repeated: '*tejosi* etc.', '*sukraja* etc.', '*vācam* etc.' after *Brahmaśāman*. Then the following too: '*pavitravantam* etc.', '*sūryasya viṣṇor mahas* etc.'

At the end of the *Japa*, he should place Viṣṇu upon the pot along with the ancillaries. At sunrise the *Homa* should be performed in due order.

53. At the outset the pot should be placed. After the worship in accordance with the injunctions, the Lord should be eulogized. Thereafter the *Homa* should be performed with the requisite *Caru*.