

Chapter 1: Introduction to Hari Ekadashi

1. Definition and Meaning

Hari Ekadashi—also known as **Haribodhini**, **Devotthan**, or **Prabodhini Ekadashi**—is one of the most sacred observances in the Hindu lunar calendar. It falls on the **11th day (Ekadashi)** of the bright fortnight (Shukla Paksha) in the month of **Kartik**. The word Hari is another name for **Lord Vishnu**, the divine preserver of the universe, and Ekadashi means “eleven.”

On this day, Lord Vishnu is believed to **awaken from his cosmic sleep**, marking the end of **Chaturmas**, a four-month period of divine rest and spiritual reflection. This awakening is not just celestial—it is symbolic of our own inner awakening.

2. Timing and Calendar

Hari Ekadashi is the **second major Ekadashi** tied to Vishnu’s sleep cycle:

- ❖ **Harishayani Ekadashi** (Ashadh Shukla Ekadashi): Vishnu enters sleep.
- ❖ **Haribodhini Ekadashi** (Kartik Shukla Ekadashi): Vishnu awakens.

This period of **Chaturmas** is a sacred pause in the Hindu year, during which devotees refrain from major celebrations and focus on **cleansing the body, mind, and karma**. Hari Ekadashi marks the **resumption of auspicious activities** like weddings, rituals, and pilgrimages.

There are **24 Ekadashis in a year**, and occasionally **26** if a leap month (Adhik Maas) occurs. Each Ekadashi has its own story and spiritual focus, but Hari Ekadashi is considered one of the most powerful.

3. Spiritual Significance

Hari Ekadashi is a **spiritual reset**—a time to realign with dharma, devotion, and discipline. It invites us to:

- ❖ **Fast** not just from food, but from distractions.
- ❖ **Reflect** on our actions and intentions.
- ❖ **Recommit** to a life of purity and purpose.

Scriptures describe Ekadashi as a day when the **gates of Vaikuntha (Vishnu's abode)** are open to sincere devotees. It is a chance to **purify the soul**, shed negative karma, and move closer to liberation (moksha).

4. Cultural Importance

In Nepal and across India, Hari Ekadashi is celebrated with **fasting, devotional singing, Tulsi Vivah rituals, and temple processions**. It marks the **beginning of the wedding season** and is deeply woven into family traditions.

In Nepali homes, devotees light lamps, offer Tulsi leaves to Vishnu, and stay awake chanting his names. The day is both **festive and meditative**, blending joy with reverence.

5. Connection to Lord Vishnu

Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of the universe, is central to Hari Ekadashi.

According to legend:

- ❖ He sleeps on the cosmic serpent **Sheshnaag** in the **Ksheer Sagar** (Ocean of Milk).
- ❖ During Chaturmas, he rests in the underworld (Patal Lok), at the gate of King Bali's realm.
- ❖ On Hari Ekadashi, he **awakens**, bringing divine energy back into the world.

This divine sleep and awakening symbolize the **cycles of rest and renewal** in our own lives.

6. Devotional Practices

Devotees observe Hari Ekadashi through:

- ❖ **Fasting** from grains, beans, and heavy foods
- ❖ **Chanting** Vishnu's names (Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya)
- ❖ **Offering** Tulsi leaves and lighting lamps
- ❖ **Performing** Tulsi Vivah (symbolic marriage of Tulsi and Shaligram)

These practices are not just rituals—they are tools for **discipline, focus, and surrender**.

उपवासेन शुद्धात्मा भवति नात्र संशयः

Upavāseṇa śuddhātmā bhavati nātra saṁśayaḥ

“By fasting, the soul becomes purified—there is no doubt.”

— Vishnu Purana

7. Why This Book Matters

In a world chasing **dopamine, distraction, and stress**, Hari Ekadashi teaches us to embrace:

- **Pause over pressure**
- **Patience over impulse**
- **Purity over chaos**

This book is written for **devotees, students, families, and seekers—to educate, preserve culture, and inspire devotion**. It is a humble offering to Lord Hari and to all who walk the path of light.

Chapter 2: The Legend of Lord Vishnu’s Sleep

1. The Beginning of Chaturmas

On **Harishayani Ekadashi**, which falls in the month of **Ashadh (June–July)**, Lord Vishnu enters a state of **Yog Nidra**—a sacred cosmic sleep. This marks the beginning of **Chaturmas**, a four-month period of divine rest and spiritual discipline. During this time, Vishnu is believed to recline on the serpent **Sheshnaag** in the **Ksheer Sagar**, the ocean of milk, withdrawing from worldly affairs to restore cosmic balance.

2. Why Does Vishnu Sleep?

According to the **Padma Purana**, Vishnu’s sleep is not ordinary—it is a divine retreat that allows the universe to pause, reflect, and renew. His slumber symbolizes:

- ♦ Rest after creation
- ♦ Balance between action and stillness
- ♦ A call for humans to turn inward

This period is considered inauspicious for worldly celebrations like weddings, as the divine energy is in repose.

3. The Role of King Bali

In some versions of the legend, Vishnu descends to the underworld (Patal Lok) in his **Vamana avatar** to bless **King Bali**, a righteous but proud demon king. Vishnu promises to guard Bali's realm during Chaturmas, symbolizing humility and divine protection.

4. Spiritual Symbolism

Vishnu's sleep is a metaphor for:

- ❖ Inner silence and reflection
- ❖ Letting go of ego and desires
- ❖ Preparing for spiritual awakening

Devotees are encouraged to practice **fasting, meditation, and simplicity** during this time, aligning themselves with the rhythm of divine rest.

5. Modern Relevance

In today's fast-paced world, Vishnu's sleep reminds us to:

- ❖ Pause from constant activity
- ❖ Detox mentally and spiritually
- ❖ Embrace stillness as strength

It's a time to cleanse our karma, reset our intentions, and prepare for the light of awakening on Hari Ekadashi.

Chapter 3: Tulsi Vivah Rituals

1. What is Tulsi Vivah?

Tulsi Vivah is the **ceremonial marriage of the Tulsi plant (Holy Basil) to Lord Vishnu**, often in the form of **Shaligram**, a sacred black stone representing the deity. This divine wedding is traditionally performed on **Hari Ekadashi** or the following day, **Kartik Dwadashi**.

It symbolises the **union of the divine feminine and masculine energies**— Goddess Vrinda (Tulsi) and Lord Vishnu (Hari). This ritual marks the end of **Chaturmas** and the **beginning of the Hindu wedding season**.

2. The Legend Behind Tulsi Vivah

According to the **Padma Purana**, Tulsi was once **Vrinda**, a devoted wife of the demon king **Jalandhar**. Her unwavering chastity made Jalandhar invincible. To restore cosmic balance, Lord Vishnu took the form of her husband and broke her vow. When Vrinda discovered the truth, she cursed Vishnu to become a stone (Shaligram) and immolated herself.

Moved by her devotion, Vishnu transformed her into the sacred **Tulsi plant** and declared that she would be **eternally worshipped** and **married to him every year**.

3. How the Ritual is Performed

The Tulsi Vivah ceremony is performed with the same joy and reverence as a traditional Hindu wedding. Here's how it unfolds:

Preparations:

- ❖ A **Tulsi plant** is cleaned and decorated with a red sari, bangles, and bindi to resemble a bride.
- ❖ A **Shaligram stone** or Vishnu idol is placed as the groom, often adorned with a dhoti and crown.
- ❖ A **mandap (wedding altar)** is set up with flowers, lamps, and sacred items.

The Ceremony:

A priest or elder performs the **wedding rituals**, including:

- ❖ **Kanyadaan** (giving away the bride)
- ❖ **Mangalashtak** (auspicious chants)
- ❖ **Phere** (symbolic circumambulations)
- ❖ **Offering sweets, fruits, and flowers**

Devotional Singing:

- ❖ Bhajans and **Tulsi stotras** are sung.

- ❖ The atmosphere is filled with **joy, reverence, and celebration.**

4. Symbolism and Spiritual Meaning

Tulsi Vivah is more than a ritual—it's a **spiritual metaphor**:

Tulsi represents **devotion, purity, and surrender.**

Vishnu represents **divine grace and protection.**

Their union teaches us that **pure devotion unites us with the divine.**

It also reflects the **sacredness of nature**, reminding us to honor plants, rivers, and all life as divine expressions.

5. Cultural Importance in Nepal and India

In Nepal, Tulsi Vivah is celebrated in homes and temples with deep reverence. Families gather to perform the ritual, especially in **Vaishnav households**. It's also a time for **community bonding**, storytelling, and passing down traditions to the younger generation.

In India, especially in Maharashtra, Gujarat, and North India, Tulsi Vivah is a major festival. In some regions, **unmarried girls perform the ritual** to seek a virtuous husband like Vishnu.

6. Modern Relevance

In a world of material weddings and fleeting relationships, Tulsi Vivah reminds us of:

- ❖ **Sacred commitment**
- ❖ **Spiritual love**
- ❖ **The power of devotion over ego**

It's a call to **reconnect with nature**, honor feminine divinity, and celebrate love that transcends form.

Chapter 4: Cultural Significance in Nepal & India

1. A Festival of Awakening

Hari Ekadashi, also known as **Haribodhini Ekadashi**, is celebrated on the 11th lunar day of Kartik Shukla Paksha. It marks the **awakening of Lord Vishnu** from his four-month cosmic sleep, symbolizing the return of divine energy to the world. This day is seen as a spiritual reset, and its cultural impact is profound across Hindu societies.

2. Celebrations in Nepal

In Nepal, Hari Ekadashi is one of the most revered festivals:

- ❖ **Temples are adorned** with flowers and lights, especially Vishnu temples like Changu Narayan and Budhanilkantha.
- ❖ **Devotees fast**, chant Vishnu's names, and perform **Tulsi Vivah** in homes and temples.
- ❖ Families gather to offer **prayers, fruits, and Tulsi leaves**, often staying awake through the night in devotion.
- ❖ The festival also marks the **start of the wedding season**, as Chaturmas ends and auspicious ceremonies resume.

3. Traditions in India

Across India, Hari Ekadashi is celebrated with regional variations:

- ❖ In **Maharashtra and Gujarat**, Tulsi Vivah is a major event, often performed with full wedding rituals.
- ❖ In **North India**, devotees visit temples and observe strict fasting, believing it purifies the soul.
- ❖ In **South India**, the day is linked to Vishnu's Vamana avatar and King Bali's story, emphasizing humility and divine grace.

The festival is also known by names like **Devotthan Ekadashi**, **Prabodhini Ekadashi**, and **Deothan**, reflecting its diverse cultural expressions.

4. Community and Family Bonding

Hari Ekadashi is not just a personal spiritual practice—it's a **community celebration**:

- ❖ Families come together to perform rituals and share stories.
- ❖ Elders pass down traditions to younger generations.
- ❖ Temples organize **bhajan programs, processions, and scriptural readings**, fostering unity and devotion.

5. Symbolism in Daily Life

The cultural essence of Hari Ekadashi teaches:

- ❖ Discipline through fasting
- ❖ Focus through rituals
- ❖ Growth through letting go

It's a reminder that **spirituality is woven into everyday life**, and that festivals are moments to pause, reflect, and reconnect—with the divine and with each other.

Chapter 5: How to Celebrate Hari Ekadashi

1. Prepare with Intention

Celebrating Hari Ekadashi begins with **mental and spiritual preparation**. The day before, devotees:

- ❖ Avoid heavy or tamasic foods (meat, onion, garlic).
- ❖ Clean their homes and prayer spaces.
- ❖ Set intentions for **fasting, prayer, and reflection**.

This is not just a ritual—it's a **spiritual reset**, a conscious pause to reconnect with the divine.

2. Fasting (Upavasa)

Fasting is the heart of Ekadashi observance. There are different levels:

- ❖ **Nirjala (waterless)**: No food or water for 24 hours.
- ❖ **Phalahar (fruit-based)**: Only fruits, nuts, and milk.
- ❖ **Satvik (light fasting)**: Avoid grains, beans, and processed foods.

The goal is not punishment, but **discipline and purification**. As the Vishnu Purana says:

उपवासेन शुद्धात्मा भवति नात्र संशयः

Upavāsena śuddhātmā bhavati nātra saṁśayaḥ

“By fasting, the soul becomes purified—there is no doubt.”

3. Worship and Rituals

On Hari Ekadashi, devotees perform **special puja to Lord Vishnu**:

- ❖ Offer **Tulsi leaves**, flowers, fruits, and incense.
- ❖ Chant Vishnu mantras like Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya.
- ❖ Read or listen to stories from the **Bhagavata Purana, Padma Purana, or Vishnu Sahasranama**.

Many also perform **Tulsi Vivah**, the symbolic marriage of Tulsi and Shaligram, as described in Chapter 3.

4. Devotional Activities

The day is filled with **bhajans, kirtans, and scriptural readings**. Devotees may:

- ❖ Visit temples or join community satsangs.
- ❖ Stay awake through the night in **Jagaran** (night vigil).
- ❖ Reflect on their spiritual journey and offer prayers for peace and clarity.

5. Breaking the Fast (Parana)

The fast is broken on **Dwadashi**, the 12th lunar day, after sunrise. It's done with gratitude and humility:

- ❖ Begin with water or fruit.
- ❖ Offer food to others or donate to the needy.
- ❖ Reflect on the experience and its impact on your mind and soul.

6. Celebrating with Family and Community

Hari Ekadashi is a time for **family bonding and cultural transmission**:

- ❖ Children learn stories and rituals from elders.

- ❖ Families perform Tulsi Vivah together.
- ❖ Communities organize processions, temple events, and shared meals.

It's a celebration of faith, unity, and devotion.

7. Modern Adaptations

Even in busy urban life or remote areas, Hari Ekadashi can be observed meaningfully:

- ❖ Digital satsangs and online bhajan sessions.
- ❖ Simple home puja with heartfelt intention.
- ❖ Journaling or meditating on Vishnu's qualities.

The essence lies in **faith over form, devotion over detail**.

Chapter 6: Devotional Songs & Mantras

1. The Power of Sound in Devotion

In Hindu tradition, **sound is sacred**. Whether it's a mantra whispered in silence or a bhajan sung with joy, devotional music connects the soul to the divine. On Hari Ekadashi, singing and chanting are central to the celebration—**they purify the mind, uplift the heart, and invoke Lord Vishnu's presence**.

2. Popular Bhajans for Hari Ekadashi

Here are some beloved bhajans sung during Hari Ekadashi and Tulsi Vivah:

- ❖ "Om Jai Jagdish Hare"—Aarti to Lord Vishnu, sung in temples and homes.
- ❖ "Tulsi Maharani Aarti" – Honoring Tulsi Devi during her symbolic wedding.
- ❖ "Govind Jai Jai, Gopal Jai Jai" – Celebrating Vishnu's playful and protective forms.
- ❖ "Shri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" – A simple yet powerful chant invoking Vishnu's avatar.

These songs are often accompanied by **harmonium, tabla, and kartal**, creating a vibrant devotional atmosphere.

3. Sacred Mantras to Chant

Mantras are **vibrational prayers**—each syllable carries spiritual energy. On Hari Ekadashi, devotees chant:

Vishnu Mantras:

- **ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय**

Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya

"I bow to Lord Vasudeva (Vishnu)."

- **ॐ विष्णवे नमः**

Om Vishnave Namah

"Salutations to Lord Vishnu."

- **ॐ नारायणाय विद्महे वासुदेवाय धीमहि तन्नो विष्णुः प्रचोदयात्**

Om Narayanaya Vidmahe Vasudevaya Dhimahi Tanno Vishnuh Prachodayat

A Vishnu Gayatri mantra for divine guidance.

4. Tulsi Stotra and Prayers

Tulsi Devi is honored with special prayers during her Vivah:

- ❖ **"Vrindayai Tulsidevyai Priyayai Kesavasya Cha"**

"Salutations to Vrinda, beloved of Lord Keshava."

- ❖ **"Tulasi Aarti"** – A devotional song praising Tulsi's purity and grace.

These are sung with reverence, often by women and children, as part of the wedding ceremony.

5. Chanting as Meditation

Chanting mantras is not just ritual—it's **meditation in motion**. It helps:

- ❖ Calm the mind
- ❖ Focus the heart
- ❖ Cleanse emotional and karmic layers

Even a few minutes of sincere chanting can create deep spiritual impact.

6. Modern Devotional Music

Many artists today blend traditional bhajans with modern instruments, making them accessible to younger generations. Platforms like YouTube and Spotify offer:

- ❖ Vishnu bhajan playlists
- ❖ Tulsi Vivah recordings
- ❖ Guided mantra meditations

This fusion keeps the tradition alive while adapting to contemporary life.

Chapter 7: Quotes from Scriptures

1. Padma Purana: Ekadashi as the Mother of All Vows

The Padma Purana glorifies Ekadashi as the most sacred of all spiritual observances:

"Of all vows, the vow of Ekadashi is the highest. It destroys all sins and grants liberation."

— Padma Purana, Chapter 15

It also warns that on Ekadashi, **sinful energies reside in grains**, which is why devotees abstain from them:

"Every kind of sinful activity takes residence in grains on this day. Whoever observes Ekadashi is freed from all sins and never enters hellish regions."

2. Vishnu Purana: Devotion Over Ritual

The Vishnu Purana emphasizes the **spirit of devotion** over mechanical ritual:

"Hari blesses those who observe Ekadashi with devotion—not merely those who follow the rules."

— Vishnu Purana (as cited in ISKCON forums)

It reminds us that the **heart of the devotee matters more than the form of the fast.**

3. Bhagavata Purana: Fasting as Liberation

The *Bhagavata Purana* teaches that **fasting on Ekadashi purifies the soul** and helps transcend karma:

“Fasting on Ekadashi burns away sins and leads the soul toward liberation.”
— Bhagavata Purana (summary from traditional commentaries)

This aligns with the deeper purpose of Ekadashi—not just abstaining from food, but from **ego, desire, and distraction.**

4. Sanskrit Verse: The Purifying Power of Fasting

A powerful verse often quoted in Ekadashi observance is:

उपवासेन शुद्धात्मा भवति नात्र संशयः

Upavāsena śuddhātmā bhavati nātra saṁśayaḥ

“By fasting, the soul becomes purified—there is no doubt.”

— Vishnu Purana

This line captures the **essence of Ekadashi**: purification through discipline and surrender.

5. The Essence of All Scriptures

Across the Puranas, the message is clear:

- ❖ Ekadashi is a gateway to grace.
- ❖ fasting is a tool for inner transformation.
- ❖ Devotion is the true offering.

These quotes are not just ancient words—they are **living wisdom**, guiding us to live with purity, patience, and purpose.

