

Ashadi Ekadashi

The 11th day of the bright half of Ashad is known as Ashadi Ekadashi, Shayani Ekadashi or Bhagwat Ekadashi. It is the beginning of the four-month period of the Hindu calendar called Chaturmas, the four auspicious monsoon months that are full of festivals and celebrations.

Chaturmas

This is a four-month period in the lunar calendar, clubbed together for seasonal and lifestyle changes. These months, full of feasts and fasts, are Ashad, Shravan, Bhadrapad and Kartik.

On the Shayani Ekadashi day, Lord Vishnu is said to commence his four-month resting period to coincide with the rainy season. At the end of this period comes Prabodhini Ekadashi, the sacred day on which Vishnu awakens again to regain control of the cycle of the universe. During the four months of Chaturmas when Vishnu is away, however, no auspicious activities (such as marriages or thread ceremonies) are conducted. Many wandering sages and mendicants stay in one place for rest and meditation during these four months.

Celebration



Pandharpur Yatra

In Maharashtra, **Ashadi Ekadashi** is also the day for the **Pandharpur Yatra**. People walk in huge processions to **Pandharpur** singing hymns and carrying the images of various saints of the region. They walk great distances, often barefoot, till they reach the temple of **Vithoba** in **Pandharpur**.



Dnyaneshwar



Tukaram



Eknath

Dyaneshwar's image is carried from **Alandi**, **Tukaram's** from **Dehu**, **Eknath's** from **Paithan**, **Nivruttinath's** from **Trimbakeshwar**, **Muktabai's** from **Edlabad**, and **Sopan's** from **Sasvad**.

Usually, on the Ekadashi day, a **ritual bath** is taken in the morning and then Vishnu or any of His other forms - such as **Narayan** or **Vithoba** - are worshipped with the offering of a **thousand tulsi leaves**. A fast is observed for the whole day and is broken only the next morning. The night is spent singing the praises of Vishnu, in a ritual called **jagran**. Many people forego the evening meal and eat early the next day.

The month of Ashad also has special significance in a country like India, which is so dependent on the monsoons. The rainy season or the **varsha ritu** is one of the six seasons into which the Hindu calendar is divided. Lyrical descriptions of the six seasons are found in the classical poem **Ritusamhara** by **Kalidasa**. These are also beautifully depicted in a series of miniature paintings called **baramasa** or the twelve months.



Ashadi is the day, when lakhs and lakhs of Varkaris from all parts of the country, especially from the state of Maharashtra, throng the spiritual capital of the state, Pandarpur, to have darshan and blessings of their chosen deity, Vittal Rakumai. When Ashadi dawns in Prasanthi Nilayam this morning, south of India, the seat of Supreme Lord in physical, hundreds of varkaris from the state of Maharashtra will be presenting themselves to their Lord, after completing a three day long symbolic 'varkari yathra' from Dharmavaram to Puttaparthi, finally to feast their eyes with the beauteous form of the Lord of Parthi, Lord Sai Vitthala. Dwelling on the significance of the day and the legacy of 'Varkari Sampradaya',

*Panduranga Vitthala,
Jai Panduranga Vitthala,
Govinda Ranga Vitthala,
Gopal Ranga Vithala,
Parthiesh Ranga Vitthala,
Prabhu Sai Ranga Vitthala*