



NEW

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Ashadi Ekadashi



Ashadi Ekadashi is more of a religious procession festival and is celebrated during the months of June- July (Aashaadh Shukla paksha). People consider the two eleventh days, "Ekadashi", of every month to be of special importance. But the eleventh day (bright) of Ashadh is known as the great Ekadashi or Mahaekadashi. This Mahaekadashi is also known as Shayani Ekadashi, because on this day Vishnu falls asleep to wake up four months later on Prabodhini Ekadashi in the Kartik month. This period is known as Chaturmas and coincides with the rainy season. Ashadi Ekadashi is the day of fast and on this day people go walking in huge processions to Pandharpur singing the Abhangas (chanting hymns) of Saint Tukaram and Saint Dnyaneshwar to see their God Vitthal.

Ashadi Ekadashi is popularly as Deva Sayani Ekadasi in other parts of the country. Scores of devotees also take a holy dip in Godavari River on the day and pay obeisance to Lord Rama at Kala Ram temple.

Significance

In the scripture Bhavishyottara Purana, god Krishna narrates significance of Shayani Ekadashi to Yudhisthira, as the creator-god Brahma narrated the significance to his son Narada once. The story of king Mandata is narrated in this context. The pious king's country had faced drought for three years, but the king was unable to find a solution to please the rain gods. Finally, sage Angiras advised the king to observe the vrata (vow) of Dev-shayani ekadashi. On doing so by the grace of Vishnu, there was rain in the kingdom.

Pandharpur Yatra

The day is of great significance to the Bhakti cult in Maharashtra. Sant Tukaram and Sant Jnaneshwar two of the great Bhakti exponents in Maharashtra reached the abode of Lord Vitthal in Pandharpur on Ashadi Ekadasi. They had set out on foot around fifteen days before the auspicious day from their villages. Sant Tukaram started from Dehu village near Pune and Sant Jnaneshwar from Alandi. They walked on foot singing the praise of Lord Vitthal and reached the shrine on the auspicious day for the darshan of the Lord.



In memory of this pilgrimage, Maharashtrians undertake Dindi Yatra or Pandharpur Yatra by foot to the Pandarpur shrine of Vitthala. The devotees are known Varkaris and they go in a procession carrying the 'palkhi' of Sant Tukaram and Sant Jnaneshwar. The yatra starts in Allandi and ends on Guru Poornima day at Pandharpur. Thousands of pilgrims come to Pandharpur on this day from from different parts of Maharashtra. Some of them carry Palkhis (palanquins) with the images of the saints of Maharashtra. Dnyaneshwar'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. These pilgrims are referred to as Warkaris. They sing Abhangas (chanting hymns) of Saint Tukaram and Saint Dnyaneshwar, dedicated to Vitthoba.

Palkhi Festival

The Palkhi festival was started by Narayan baba, the youngest son of saint Tukaram, in the year 1685. Diverting from the existing dindi-wari tradition of that time, Narayan baba along with his dindis started the palkhi containing the silver padukas (footsteps) and mask of saint Tukaram from Dehu and proceeded to Alandi to place the padukas of Saint Dnyaneshwar in the same palkhi before heading to Pandharpur. This practice continued until the year 1830 when disputes within the Tukaram family in regards to the right and privileges of the palkhi brought about a change in the tradition. So from 1830 onwards, the practice of the twin practice gave way to two separate palkhis of the two saints which start from their respective towns

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