

:::::::::: Jai Sri Radha Domodarki Jai ::::::::::

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## Sri Kartika Mahatmya

From

**Hari Bhakti- Vilasa**

By

**Sri Sanatana Gosvami**

-----:KARTIKA MAHATMYA :-----

The activities to be performed during Kartika are exhaustively dealt with in Puranas such as Skanda and Padma Puranas. Here summarising the essential features of those descriptions.

In this month a vaisnava should regularly worship Sri Damodara and undertake vows such as bathing before sunrise, giving alms, and so on.

A human being who wastes the month of Kartika is like the fool who acquires a cintamani gem and then throws it in a morass. One will be rejected by Sri Krishna, if he spends Kartika without regulations, because this month is very dear to Him. **(Padma Purana, Dialogue between Narada and Saunaka and other sages)**

This most rare human form, attained after billions of births, will be taken away from those who do not worship Visnu during Kartika. Ten years of pious activities are nullified for those who in this month do not worship Hari, listen to Hari Katha, and see Vaisnavas. **(Skanda Purana, Dialogue between Brahma and Narada)**

### Greatness of Kartika

**The general virtues of Kartika with specific activities and places related to it.**

**General Virtues of Kartika,**

The merits accrued by bathing in all holy places and performing all sorts of charity cannot match the results attainable in this month even if multiplied by the millions.

My dear son, visiting holy places, performing Yajnas and giving daksina, residing in Puskara, Kuruksetra, in the Himalayas or offering in charity the weight Mount Meru in gold are all very nice, but only Kartika is dear to Kesava in all respects. O Narada these are the facts, in this month pious deeds aimed at Vishnu's satisfaction yield imperishable fruits, for this the best month, the holiest among the holy and the purest among the purifiers.

O Narada, the merits and demerits obtained during Kartika are like rivers, mountains and oceans in this they are never exhausted. There is

No month equal to Kartika

No Yuga equal to Satya

No scriptures equal to Veda

No tirtha equal to Ganga

O great sage, this is the best month and is always dear to Vaisnavas. By serving Kartika Month with devotion a vaisnava can deliver any of his ancestors who are suffering in hell.

#### **( Skanda Purana, Dialogue between Brahma and Narada )**

Of the twelve months, this month is particularly dear to Sri Krishna. Sri Vishnu certainly rewards the devotee who worships Him during Kartika with residence in His own abode, even if worshipped with minimum items. Damodara is famous as Bhakta- Vatsala, and His mouth imbibes His characteristics: it rewards even a tiny effort with huge results.

Of all the living species the ephemeral human form is seldom achieved by the incarnated being, and throughout his existence the month of Kartika, which is so dear to Hari, is ever rarer.

#### **( Padma Purana, dialogue between Narada, Saunaka and other sages )**

##### **Virtues of Kartika Vratas**

In this world, the results of vows last for one lifetime only, but the effects of Kartika vratas extend up to one hundred lives.

The results of bathing at Akrura-tirtha while fasting on the full moon day of Kartika can be achieved simply by hearing about this Vaisnav vrata. This type of vrata yields pious results equal to those available from pilgrimages to Varanasi, Kuruksetra, Naimisaranya, Puskara and Arbuda ( Mount Abu ) By undertaking this vrata even a person who never performs a sacrifice and who never offers pinda to his ancestors can attain the status of a Vaishnava. By restricting his usual eating habits in the course of this Kartika vrata one will definitely obtain liberation, earning a form similar to Krishna.

O eminent sage, after executing a Kartika vrata a person will not take any more low births, be he a brahmana, a ksatriya, a Vaisya or Sudra.

O celebrated sage, a person who undertakes the Vaishnava vrata according to his best capacity has liberation already waiting on his palm. A vrata yields the maximum results even when minimally performed during Kartika. This month is worshipped even by devarsis and pitrs.

### **(Skanda Purana, dialogue between Brahma and Narada)**

#### **Virtues of specific activities**

The charity, penance, homa, and japa all give unfading results when performed during Kartika. Moreover, whatever one donates, especially eatables, for Lord Vishnu's satisfaction, yields perpetual results

Whoever sits in svastikasana\* ( \*A particular sitting posture ) during this month is rewarded with a full year worth of Agnihotra sacrifices. A woman who draws a mandala in the temple of Kesava will shine in heaven like a kapoti \*( \* A Dove) bird. The man who regularly offers meals (to Sri Vishnu) during Kartika will not meet with calamities throughout the reign of fourteen Indras.

By eating on leaves of the Brahma\* (\*Butea Frondosa) tree, all past sins are annihilated, every desire is fulfilled, the merit of every pilgrimage accrues and hell will never be seen. O great sage, this palasa tree is also known as Brahma for it fulfils any desire. Donating sesame, bathing in a river, hearing saintly discourses, serving saintly persons and eating on brahma leaves all confer liberation when performed during Kartika.

In this month, the merit of donating one thousand cows accrues to the person who is awake in front of Damodara at dawn and Sri Visnu's abode is at hand someone who is awake during the last yama of the night.

Kartika vratas, like serving saints, feeding cows, hearing holy speeches, worshipping Sri Visnu and being awake during the last three hours of the night are all rare feats in the age of Kali.

The benefits of donating thousands of jala-dhenus\* {\*The details of donating a jala-dhenu are given in **Varaha Purana**. In few words-on an auspicious occasions, the ground is purified with cow dung; there a kumbha (Water pot) is placed and filled with scented water. Then, while meditating on it as a cow with her calf, this Kumbha is decorated with various flowers and rich foodstuffs. Finally, the whole thing is to be donated to a brahmana. It is counted among the most purifying and pious activities} when the sun is in Taurus can be achieved in this month merely by ablutions.

The merits of bathing in the Sannihati lake Kuruksetra on Sunday at the time of a solar eclipse is obtained by a single bath during Kartika.

O great sage, there is perpetual value in grains and water offered to the ancestors during Kartika, Sri Krsna's dearest month.

O Narada, just by passing this month in the merriment of music one may not take birth again. I have personally witnessed this.

During Kartika every step taken while circumambulating Sri Visnu's temple yields the benefit of an Asvamedha sacrifice. By singing, playing or dancing with devotion before Lord Hari one reaches the eternal realm. By reading Sri Hari's thousand names or the episode of Gajendra's liberation, one will never again experience birth or death, by reciting prayers and singing during the last yama of the night one will dwell in Svetadvipa along with his ancestors.

O great sage, by offering eatables to Sri Hari one will reside in heaven for as many as the number of yavas\* (\* A measure of weight equal to one grain of barley) in those foodstuff. By burning aguru\* (\* A fragrance extracted from the tree Amyris Agallocha. It has pungent, warm and astringent qualities) and camphor for the pleasure of the Lord one will not take birth again, not even when the yuga will end.

Moreover for those who hear Visnu- katha in this month, each half verse or quarter of verse yields the fruits of donating one hundred cows; indeed, O great sage, all other duties should be given up in favour of hearing scriptures from holy men. Be it for spiritual benefit or with other expectations by engaging in Hari Katha one uplifts hundreds of his family's generations. A person will burn all sinful reactions and gain the fruit of ten thousand sacrifices for each day of Kartika spent in the delight of the scriptures. In fact Madhusudana is not as pleased by sacrifices or by charity of cows and elephants as He is pleased by discourses from the scriptures during Kartika. O eminent sage, by hearing Hari Katha one can transcend the distress accumulated in millions of births. By regularly trying to read Srimad Bhagavatam during this month one gains the benefit of reading all eighteen Puranas.

Furthermore, during Kartika a man should cultivate supreme devotion by living among Vaisnava, at the cost of giving up acts of piety and other prescribed duties.

### **( Skanda Purana, dialogue between Brahma and Narada )**

In this month, one who sleeps on the floor, maintains celibacy , worships Sri Damodara and eats only havisya\* (\*Restricted food eaten during fast days such as Ekadasi ) items using palasa leaves is freed from all sins and will taste the bliss of Lord Visnu in Vaikuntha.

He who eats palasa leaves and offers his food to Sri Hari becomes sinless and achieves liberation.

Thousands of offenses and even the greatest sins of someone who worship Lord Hari during Kartika will all be forgiven and if he offers to Sri Visnu His favourite candied sugar and sweet

rice with ghee and honors the Lords remnants, he gains the same merit of performing sacrifices, day after day.

**(Padma Purana, dialogue between Narada, Saunaka and other sages)**

Those who bathe, stay awake, offer lamps and care for Tulasi's garden during Kartika will obtain a form similar to Lord Visnu's. Those who perform these practices for just three days become the object of the demigods' prayers. What then, shall I say about those who can do it throughout their life?

**(Padma Purana dialogue between Sri Krishna and Satyabhama)**

**Types of Kartika Vratas**

Specific Kartika vratas are: Hari Jagaranam (\*Remaining awake in Lord Hari's honor), bathing at dawn, tending Tulasi, completing a charitable work and offering dipas. A person who undertakes these five vows can attain both bhukti and Mukti.

Hari Jagaranam may be performed in temples of Visnu or Siva, near Asvattha trees or in places where Tulasi grows.

A person who cannot get bathing water for his ablutions or who is sick should purify himself by chanting Lord Visnu's names.

If a charitable work cannot be completed in time, one can feed brahmanas in a quantity proportional to the work and thus temporarily fulfil his vow.

If one is unable to offer a dipa, one can endeavour to revive another's dipa or protect it from the wind.

In the absence of Tulasi plants, one can serve Vaisnavas and brahmanas instead, and if none of the five vows is feasible, then by serving brahmanas, cows and Asvattha or Vata trees, he can still complete his vrata.

**(Padma Purana, dialogue between Sri Krishna and Satyabhama )**

**Virtues of Offering dipa ( dipa -dana )**

The sins accumulated in millions of kalpas vanish in an instant when a dipa is offered during Kartika. O great brahmana , listen to this dipa's virtues, which are dear to Kesava. By offering dipa in this month a person will not take birth on earth again.

This dipa-dana bestows all the benefits available at Kuruksetra during solar eclipses and at Narmada during lunar eclipses, multiplied by the millions. O

great sage, what is the value of Asvamedha\* { \*Sacrifice performed by a king as a proof of supremacy on other kings. The horse (asva) was let loose to wander for one year, escorted by the army and whenever it would enter a foreign state the ruler of that state was asked to surrender or fight. A great sacrifice was performed at the return of the horse. It was said that whoever would perform one hundred Asvamedha sacrifices attained the post of Indra, who therefore always tried to prevent this to happen. } sacrifices for someone who in this month lights ghee or oil lamps? By this offering to the Lord, all prescribed activities, even if devoid of mantra, rituals and cleanliness, are brought to perfection. Anyone who offers dipa to Kesava during Kartika is actually performing all sorts of ablutions and sacrificial ceremonies.

On the other hand, all the pious deeds of the three worlds are not effective ( literally, “all pious deeds keep sulking”) if this Kartika dipa does not burn before Lord Kesava.

O brahmana, since time immemorial the ancestors are praying, “if a scion who can please Lord Kesava by this dipa-dana would appear in our lineage, we would certainly all become liberated by the mercy of the Lord, who has a cakra on His hand.

Moreover, even if the volume of one’s sins equals Mount Meru, this dipa-dana can certainly incinerate them. Be it in a temple of Lord Vasudeva or in one’s private house, this offering yields amazing results. Indeed, the person who lights this dipa before Madhusudana is fortunate and glorious, because even hundreds of sacrifices and ablutions in holy places cannot match the results instantly acquired by this dipa-dana.

Even one who never performs religious rituals or even the worst sinner will surely be purified by this offering. O Narada, in the three worlds there is no sin that can stand before this Kartika dipa. In fact, by presenting this dipa before Lord Vasudeva, the eternal abode can be reached without obstruction.

Now I will tell you about the merits accruing to one who offers a dipa with camphor throughout Kartika or particularly on the day of Dvadasi. O Narada , all the born or to be born members of one’s family line including all the innumerable forefathers, will enjoy in heaven for a long time according to their wishes and will attain liberation by the grace of Lord Hari, who has cakra on His hand.

In this month, O great brahmana, a person who illuminates Lord Kesava's temple even for the sake of gambling purifies his family up to seven generations. And those who kindle this Kartika dipa in a temple of Lord Visnu will prosper with wealth, progeny, good reputation and fame. Just as friction manifests the fire inherent in any wood, so this dipa-dana undoubtedly manifests dharma\* (Present in any action) {\*Fire is inherent in wood and becomes manifest when friction provokes it. Similarly, dharma is inherent in ( it is depending on ) actions and can become manifest only through this dipa-dana. In other words, without this dipa-dana any other action aiming at dharma becomes sterile.}

O eminent brahmana, the destitute should also arrange for this offering throughout the month and until the full moon day, even if it is necessary to sell his own person to do so.

The fool who does not offer this dipa-dana in Lord Kesava's temple during Kartika, O sage, should never be considered a vaisnava.

#### **( Skanda Purana, dialogue between Brahma and Narada )**

Between the offering of all existing wealth and the offering of a dipa during Kartika there is no comparison- in fact, the latter is certainly more precious.

#### **(Naradiya Purana, dialogue between Rukmangada and Mohini )**

A person who kindles an akhanda dipa\* (\*This is the dipa which burns uninterruptedly throughout day and night) before Lord Hari will leave for the Lord's abode on a effulgent vehicle and live there in bliss.

#### **( Padma Purana, dialogue between Sri Krishna and Satyabhama )**

### **Virtues of Reviving Someone Else's Dipa**

All the results acquired by donating grains during pitr-paksa or by distributing water in the months of Jyesta or Asadha are easily gained in the course of Kartika merely by reviving a dipa offered by someone else. In this month the fruits of Rajasuya ( A great sacrifice performed by an emperor, signifying

unchallenged sovereignty over smaller monarchs. ) and Asvamedha sacrifices are attainable just by reviving another's dipa and by serving the Vaisnavas.

O best of kings, the person who revives a dipa in Hari's temple shall never suffer Yamaraja's torments again.

The results of reviving someone else's dipa during Kartika cannot be obtained by any other means, not even by the greatest sacrifice.

Once even a mouse attained the rare human form and reached the supreme destination after reviving a dipa on Ekadasi.

**(Skanda Purana, dialogue between Brahma and Narada)**

### **Virtues of a dipa on the Temple Dome ( sikhara – dipa )**

O great sage, know that the stock of sins will continue melting as long as a dipa shines on top of the temple.

The fruits accrued by offering in charity the whole earth with her belt of oceans to brahmanas, by donating millions of milk cows or by giving everything in charity to Vaisnavas, is not even a sixteenth part of the result yielded by installing a dipa on top of Hari's temple.

Moreover, a person who settles a dipa on the dome or within the temple delivers hundreds of generations in his lineage even if he is hired and in the family of those who admire with great devotion the illuminated temple of Lord Kesava no one will ever experience hell.

Observing a human offering a lamp to Lord Visnu , even the demigods think, “ when will I get his association?” In fact, even the post of Indra is within the reach of someone who offers this sikhara-dipa.

**( Skanda Purana, dialogue between Brahma and Narada )**

### **Virtues of String of Lamps ( dipa Mala )**

A person who arranges a dipa-mala inside and outside Lord Visnu's temple will attain a form similar to the Lord's with conch and cakra. Moreover, he is assured that in his family, line hundreds of thousands will not go to hell.

O sage, he who arranges a dipa-mala, inside and outside Lord Visnu's temple will leave for the supreme abode on the path illuminated by those very dipas.

**(Skanda Purana, dialogue between Brahma and Narada)**

A person who arranges a beautiful dipa-mala during Kartika and particularly on the days of Ekadasi, when the Lord awakens and Dvadasi illuminates the four directions with his radiance and situated on a luminous vehicle, brightens the universe with the lustre of his body. He will live in Visnuloka for many thousands years as the number of ghee lamps that he arranged.

**(Bhavisya Purana)**

Virtues of a Dipa Elevated to the Sky (Akasa- dipa)

A person who in this month elevates a lamp high in the sky delivers his family and reaches the abode of Lord Visnu.

Now listen to the merits of elevating dipas or floating them on the water in Lord Visnu's honor during Kartika, these dipa will bring wealth, abundance prosperity, all sorts of opulence, progeny, a benign glance and wisdom.

Moreover, the sages say that who arranges a Kartika dipa for the house of a brahmana will gain the results of an Agnistoma sacrifice (A sacrificial ceremony done in spring time.) Dipas placed at crossroads, by the sides of main roads, in brahmanas house, at the roots of the trees, in cow-pens, in forests or in caves, all bestow great results.

**(Padma Purana, dialogue between Sri Krishna and Satyabhama)**

**Akasa-dipa-mantra:**

**Damodaraya nabhasi tulayam lolaya saha**

**Pradipan te prayacchami namo nantaya vedhase.**

In this month of Kartika I am elevating this dipa to the sky for you, O Damodara, who are accompanied by Laksmi. O unlimited, O Supreme Creator, I offer obeisances to You.

**(Padma Purana, dialogue between Sri Krishna and Satyabhama)**

### **Virtues of Kartika Related to Specific Locations:**

During Kartika , a person who bathes or gives alms, no matter where, earns the merits of an Agnihotra sacrifice and the results are even more if this pious deed includes worship as well; the results are millions of times more if in this month one bathes at Kuruksetra or in the Ganges, O scion of Bhrgu, and even greater if one bathes at Puskara. Finally, bathing and worshipping in Dvaraka bestows Krsna –salokya.\* (\*Residing on the planet of Lord Krsna).

O assembled sages, each one of the seven holy cities { The seven sacred cities are Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya ( Gaya ), Kasi ( Varanasi ) ,Kanci , Avanti ( Ujjain ) and Dvaraka and they can all grant moksa } offer the same amount of pious merits, but Mathura stands alone, because only there Lord Hari displayed His character as Damodara. Therefore the Lord is extremely pleased and certainly offers the highest reward to one who performs Kartika vratas in Mathura.

It was in this month that the child Dhruva (see, Srimad Bhagavatam canto 4 chapter 8) quickly obtained the vision of Lord Hari by worshipping Him in Mathura, although He can rarely be seen even by great yogis.

When one worships Sri Krsna along with His dear Radhika, what is the use of sacrifices, penances, and pilgrimage to other holy places? During Kartika , in fact, all the existing holy places, rivers and lakes are present in Mathura.

If mocking Lord Hari's devotees in Mathura could produce such an amazing results\*, (\*This refers to the anecdote, narrated in **Padma Purana**, of Dhumrakesa, a prince who was a great sinner and was involved in all sorts of crimes. Exhilarated by his father, he was hiding in Vrindavana and occasionally was going to steal in Mathura . There he fell in love with a prostitute. One day he mimed in jest upon seeing a devoted brahmana, Satyavrata, who was engaged in worship. The next morning he was caught and killed by the king's guards. Surprisingly enough, when summoned by Yamaraja he was highly honoured and after a dissertation on dharma, he went on to Vaikuntha-loka.) What shall then he said about worshipping Lord Hari with faith and devotion?

(Padma Purana dialogue between Sri Krsna and Satyabhama)

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