

PARVA VIVEKA

Understanding Festivals Through Śāstra

*A Study of Time, Discipline, and Inner Transformation in
Sanātana Dharma*



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(Sanatana Revealed)

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This work presents interpretations based on selected śāstric sources. It is intended for educational and reflective purposes and does not replace traditional instruction or guidance.

The Sanskrit verses included in this book are drawn from traditional sources. Transliterations and translations are provided for clarity and accessibility.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of references. Any errors or omissions are unintentional.

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Disclaimer

This work presents an interpretative exploration of festivals through selected primary sources of Sanātana Dharma, including the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, Rāmāyaṇa, and Mahābhārata.

The perspectives offered here are intended to highlight underlying principles within these sources. They do not claim to represent the only valid interpretation, nor do they seek to override the diversity of practices that exist across regions, traditions, and communities.

Contemporary observances have evolved over time through cultural, social, and historical influences. This work does not reject or diminish those practices. Its purpose is to reconnect them with foundational ideas found in śāstra, allowing for a deeper understanding where possible.

Readers are encouraged to approach the content with openness and discernment, and, where appropriate, to seek guidance from qualified teachers within their own traditions.

This book is intended for educational and reflective purposes. It does not prescribe ritual procedures, nor does it replace traditional instruction.

Dedication

To those who look beyond form,
and refuse to mistake repetition for understanding,

and to the śāstra,
where meaning remains intact,
waiting to be seen.

Preface

This book arises from a simple observation: much of what is practiced today continues with familiarity, but not always with clarity.

Festivals are observed, rituals are performed, and traditions are maintained across generations. This continuity carries value. It preserves connection, identity, and a sense of belonging. Yet, alongside this continuity, there often exists a quiet distance from the **underlying purpose** of these observances.

Over time, form tends to remain visible, while meaning becomes less explicit. This work begins from that point - not as a critique, but as an inquiry.

What do these observances signify within the framework of śāstra? What role do they play in shaping human conduct and understanding? And how might they be approached in a way that restores their original intent?

The approach taken here is deliberate. The foundation of this exploration rests on primary sources - **Vedas, Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, Rāmāyaṇa, and Mahābhārata**. These are treated not as distant texts, but as frameworks through which principles can be understood. Where narrative is used, it serves only to illustrate, not to define.

At the same time, it is important to clarify that this work does not seek to oppose or diminish contemporary practice. Traditions evolve, and their expressions naturally adapt to changing contexts. Collective celebration, cultural forms, and community participation all have their place.

The intention here is different. It is to **reconnect practice with principle**—to understand what these observances are designed to do, beyond how they are commonly performed.

For this reason, the tone of the book remains measured. It does not attempt to prescribe rigid methods, nor does it claim exclusivity of interpretation. It offers a lens - grounded in śāstra - through which festivals may be viewed with greater clarity.

The name under which this work is presented, *Sanatana Revealed*, reflects this intention. It is not presented as authority, but as an effort to make visible what is already present within the tradition.

If, through this exploration, familiar observances begin to be seen differently - if even a small shift occurs from repetition toward awareness - then the purpose of this work is fulfilled.

Introduction

Festivals in India are often experienced as moments of celebration - times marked by light, gathering, ritual, and shared expression. They are woven deeply into daily life, appearing familiar and continuous across generations. Yet, when observed closely, a question begins to arise: *what are these observances truly meant to do?*

In common understanding, festivals are often approached as cultural events or inherited traditions. Their forms are preserved, their dates remembered, and their practices repeated. While this continuity has value, it can also lead to a gradual shift in emphasis - from purpose to form, from understanding to habit.

Sanātana Dharma, as reflected in its foundational śāstra, does not present these observances as isolated celebrations. It situates them within a structured framework - one that connects **time (kāla)**, **action (karma)**, **discipline (niyama)**, and **understanding (jñāna)**. Within this framework, festivals are not occasional interruptions, but **recurring points of alignment**.

This book approaches festivals from that perspective.

It does not attempt to catalogue practices exhaustively, nor does it seek to prescribe uniform methods of observance. Instead, it focuses on understanding the **principles that underlie them** - drawing primarily from the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, and Itihāsa.

Each chapter follows a consistent structure:

- A śāstric reference in Sanskrit
- Its transliteration and meaning
- A gradual explanation that moves from principle to application

The intention is to begin with what is foundational, and then allow the understanding to unfold in a way that remains accessible.

At the same time, it is important to clarify what this work is *not*. It is not a rejection of current practices, nor an attempt to diminish their cultural or emotional significance. Observances evolve with time, and their forms adapt to changing contexts. This work simply seeks to **reconnect those forms with their underlying intent**.

As the chapters progress, the reader will notice that festivals are approached not as independent events, but as expressions of a larger system:

- Some align with the structure of time
- Some cultivate discipline and restraint
- Some illuminate knowledge
- Others illustrate Dharma through lived narratives

Seen together, they form a coherent approach to living - one that integrates external observance with internal transformation.

The aim, therefore, is not to provide information alone, but to invite a shift in perspective. When festivals are understood in this way, even simple acts can regain meaning, and familiar practices can become opportunities for awareness.

This book is best approached not as a text to be completed quickly, but as one to be engaged with gradually - allowing space for reflection alongside reading.

In doing so, what appears at first as a collection of observances may begin to reveal itself as something more: a structured way of relating to time, action, and understanding within the framework of Sanātana Dharma.

How to Use This Book

This book is not designed to be read as a continuous narrative alone. It is structured as a series of explorations - each chapter addressing a specific observance or principle within the framework of Sanātana Dharma.

To gain the most from it, it may be helpful to approach it with both **attention and reflection**, rather than speed.

1. Structure of Each Chapter

Each chapter follows a consistent format:

- A **śāstric reference in Sanskrit**
- Its **transliteration**
- A clear **meaning**
- A gradual **explanation**, moving from principle to application

This progression is intentional. It begins with what is foundational and then unfolds into what is understandable in practice.

2. Reading Approach

The book can be approached in two ways:

- **Sequentially** - to understand the complete framework as it develops
- **Selectively** - to explore specific festivals or observances

Both approaches are valid. However, reading the early chapters helps establish the conceptual foundation that supports the rest.

3. Pace of Reading

This is not a text that requires rapid reading. Many sections are meant to be **paused upon and reflected on**.

Even a single chapter, when read with attention, may offer more value than multiple chapters read quickly.

4. Repetition as Design

Certain ideas may appear repeatedly across chapters - such as time (*kāla*), discipline (*niyama*), and intention (*saṅkalpa*).

This repetition is deliberate.

Observances themselves are cyclical. In the same way, understanding deepens not through a single explanation, but through **revisiting the same idea in different contexts**.

5. Practical Engagement

The purpose of this book is not only to inform, but to **shift the way observances are approached**.

Even small changes in attention can be meaningful:

- Noticing the timing of an observance
- Introducing a moment of restraint
- Reflecting briefly on its purpose

These are sufficient to begin engaging with the framework.

6. A Note on Interpretation

The explanations offered here are based on selected śāstric sources and are intended to clarify underlying principles.

They are not presented as the only way to understand or practice. Readers may continue to follow their own traditions while using this text as a **lens for deeper understanding**.

Closing Note

This book is best approached not as something to complete, but as something to return to. With each return, what is familiar may begin to appear with greater clarity.

Chapter 12

Ekādaśī - Cyclical Restraint

Among the many observances found within Sanātana Dharma, Ekādaśī occupies a distinctive place - not because of outward scale or collective celebration, but because of its **regularity and inward orientation**. It appears quietly, twice within each lunar cycle, and in doing so, introduces a rhythm of discipline that is both gentle and persistent.

Ekādaśī is determined by the lunar calendar, occurring on the eleventh day of each fortnight. Unlike solar transitions that mark larger shifts, this is a **recurring interval**, woven into the natural waxing and waning of the moon. Its significance lies not in a single moment of change, but in **repetition** - in the opportunity it provides to return, again and again, to a state of conscious restraint.

1. The Rhythmic Nature of the Observance

Time, as we have seen, moves through cycles. The lunar cycle, in particular, reflects subtle variations - growth toward fullness, followed

by gradual decline. Ekādaśī appears within both halves of this cycle, not at its extremes, but at a point that suggests **interruption within movement**.

This positioning is meaningful. It introduces a pause before culmination and again before dissolution, as if to remind the individual that **momentum need not always be followed to its end**. There can be points where movement is observed rather than continued.

2. The Principle of Restraint

At its core, Ekādaśī is associated with **upavāsa**, commonly understood as fasting. Yet, as seen earlier, upavāsa is not merely abstention from food. It is an act of **drawing closer - reducing outward engagement so that inward awareness becomes more accessible**.

Primary Śāstra Reference

Source: Bhagavad Gītā 2.60

Sanskrit:

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।
इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥

Transliteration:

yatato hy api kaunteya puruṣasya vipaścitaḥ
indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabhaṁ manaḥ

Meaning:

Even for a discerning person striving for control, the turbulent senses can forcibly carry away the mind.

This observation is central. The senses do not remain still by default; they move outward, seeking engagement. Restraint, therefore, is not an artificial imposition, but a **necessary counterbalance**.

Ekādaśī provides a structured context for this counterbalance. By limiting intake and reducing habitual engagement, it allows the individual to notice how strongly the mind is drawn outward - and, in that noticing, to begin gently redirecting it.

3. Interruption of Habit

Human behaviour, as discussed earlier, is shaped by repetition. Actions performed daily become patterns, and patterns begin to operate without conscious involvement. Over time, life may continue in this way - efficient, but largely automatic.

Ekādaśī introduces a subtle disruption into this flow.

On this day, familiar patterns are altered:

- Eating is reduced or modified
- Routine engagement is reconsidered
- Attention is drawn to what would otherwise proceed unnoticed

This interruption is not abrupt or forceful. It is periodic and contained, allowing the individual to step out of habit without abandoning life itself.

4. Awareness Through Limitation

It is often through limitation that awareness becomes clearer. When something is reduced, its presence is felt more distinctly.

Consider the experience of fasting. Hunger arises, but alongside it come other responses - impatience, distraction, even subtle agitation. These are not created by the fast; they are revealed through it.

Primary Śāstra Reference

Source: Bhagavad Gītā 2.58

Sanskrit:

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।

Transliteration:

yadā saṃharate cāyaṃ kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ

Meaning:

When one withdraws the senses from their objects, like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs, one becomes steady.

This image is instructive. Withdrawal is not permanent, nor is it forced. It is **measured and intentional**, creating a space in which steadiness can arise.

Ekādaśī, in this sense, is less about what is given up, and more about **what becomes visible when habitual engagement is reduced**.

5. The Role of Repetition

A single act of restraint may offer insight, but it is through repetition that transformation begins to take shape. Ekādaśī, by recurring twice each month, establishes a rhythm that is neither overwhelming nor negligible.

Each occurrence becomes an opportunity:

- To observe patterns more clearly
- To refine discipline slightly
- To deepen awareness incrementally

Primary Śāstra Reference

Source: Bhagavad Gītā 6.26

Sanskrit:

यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

Transliteration:

yato yato niścaraṭi manaś cañcalam asthiram
tatas tato niyamyaitad ātmany eva vaśam nayet

Meaning:

Wherever the restless mind wanders, one should gently bring it back under control.

The emphasis here is not on force, but on **return**. In the same way, Ekādaśī is not about achieving perfection in a single attempt. It is about returning, repeatedly, to the effort of awareness.

6. Ekādaśī Within the Framework of Practice

Seen in the broader context of this work:

- It is aligned with **Kāla** → a recurring point within the lunar cycle
- It embodies **Niyama** → a structured discipline
- It is guided by **Saṅkalpa** → a conscious intention

Thus, Ekādaśī is not an isolated practice. It is a **complete expression of the framework already established.**

7. Understanding the Evolution of Practice

In contemporary practice, Ekādaśī is often observed through dietary adjustments - certain foods are avoided, while others are permitted. In many cases, the emphasis shifts toward identifying what can be consumed within the framework of the fast.

This reflects a natural adaptation. It allows the observance to remain accessible and sustainable across different contexts.

At the same time, such adaptations may shift attention toward **substitution rather than restraint**. The underlying principle - of reducing engagement and observing the mind - may not always remain central.

Balanced View

The continuation of the observance itself is significant. When accompanied by awareness of its purpose, even adapted forms can retain their depth.

8. Essence of the Chapter

Ekādaśī is not defined by what is avoided, but by **what is revealed**.

It is a recurring invitation to pause within the movement of life, to observe the workings of the mind, and to gradually cultivate the capacity for restraint.

Core Insight

In the steady return of Ekādaśī, discipline becomes rhythm, and rhythm becomes transformation.

Continue the Journey...

Every parva is more than a date.
Every vrata is more than a ritual.
Every utsava is more than a celebration.

The chapters that follow explore how these observances become instruments of discipline, clarity, and inner transformation when understood through the lens of **śāstra**. From **Ekādaśī** and **Mahāśivarātri** to **Dīpāvalī**, **Guru Pūrṇimā**, **Janmāṣṭamī**, **Pitṛ Pakṣa**, and many others, each chapter uncovers the principles that give these traditions their enduring meaning.

Continue the journey into the wisdom behind the observances.

Read the Complete Book

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