



SPECIAL FEATURE

SIGNIFICANCE & IMPORTANCE OF TULASI FOR HINDUS

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Introduction

Tulasi is a divine plant, is a house hold name among Hindus regarded as the ultimate symbol of purity. Tulasi is a Sanskrit word and literally means the one that has no equals, the one which has no comparison, matchless and the one whose merits are invaluable. Tulasi is considered as very sacred and divine plant that has both physical and spiritually healing properties. It is worshipped as a Deity in Hindu religion, since time immemorial. In olden days the presence of Tulasi in a house was considered as a symbol of religious and spiritual leaning of that family.

Different types of Tulasi

There are many varieties of Tulasi namely, Krishna Tulasi, Rama Tulasi, Lakshmi Tulasi, Vana Tulasi, Karpooora Tulasi, Rudrajata Tulasi and so on. Tulasi is not a seasonal plant. It is a perennial plant whose flowers are available throughout the year. Generally, Tulasi plant will be green or light red colour and emanates pleasant fragrance, astringent in taste and grows up to 100 cm. in height. We find generally Tulasi as an indoor plant which also grows extensively in forests. Botanical name for Tulasi is *Oscimum Sanctum* and is known as Holy Basil in English. Even in this botanical name we find sanctity in the word sanctum. Lots of Hindu households would have Tulasi plant in their courtyard. Some people construct a small structure around Tulasi plant called as *Tulasi Peetam* or *Tulasi Brindavan*. The great saint and composer who scripted the *Tulasi Ramayana* (Sri Rama Charitha Manas) had his name as *Tulsidas*. Tuls Manasa Mandir is a famous place to visit in Varanasi (Banaras). Tulasi, the perennial symbol of Hindu philosophy, tradition, culture and heritage is a Nature's gift to the mankind, that is associated with man's day to day life. It is referred to as Kalpa Vriksha of Bhoo Loka. Blessed are those who pluck Tulasi leaves daily for the pooja and worship Lord Vishnu.

Reference to Tulasi in the Puranas



Worshipping Tulasi Plant



Tulasi Plant

Glory of Tulasi mentioned in several Puranas like Padma Purana, Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Skanda Purana, Garuda Purana, Karthika Purana, Vishnu Dharmottara Purana etc. As per Padma Purana, it is said that Tulasi came out from the joyous tears of **Lord Dhanvantri** (a Divine Medic and an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) that fell on the Amrita (nectar) that he had brought from the bottom of the ocean during the **Ksheera Sagara Madhanam** (Churning of the Ocean of Milk).

According to Padma Purana, lord Krishna, for the benefit of the people in the material world brought Vrindadevi in the form of a plant (Tulasi) on earth. Offering of even one Tulasi leaf to Lord Krishna is equivalent to offering all the flowers, sandal paste and fruits to the Lord. Just as the Ganga purifies everyone who bathes in Her, so also Tulasi purifies all Her worshippers in three worlds.

While citing the importance of Tulasi, it has been mentioned in Padma Purana, that offering flowers made of gold, stones and pearls do not have even one sixteenth of the importance of Tulasi. Sins of even of many eras are destroyed by sight, touch, meditation, obeisance, planting and use of Tulasi. All deities reside in the plant of Tulasi from its roots to the tip. It constantly

emits the principles of deities and makes the surrounding environment sacred. That is why a house with a **tulasi vrindavanam** is considered sacred.

- The unmanifest and subtle most Vishnu principle is absorbed through the stem of Tulasi leaf and is then converted into **Krishna principle** and goes on flowing through the stem.
- **Chaitanya** (consciousness) is activated at the base of the Tulasi leaf and is projected into atmosphere in the form of circles. This chaitanya simultaneously flows through the vessels of Tulasi leaf.
- The particles of **Sakti** (divine energy) are also present in the leaves of Tulasi.
- The particles of Chaitanya and Krishna principle are transmitted into atmosphere through the inflorescence.

Spiritual and Religious Significance of Tulasi

Entire Tulasi plant, the leaves, flowers, stems, roots, seeds and even the Mrittika (clay of Tulasi plant) are all full of spiritual, religious and medicinal significance. Tulasi is also called with names like, Viswavandhana, Brinda, Pushparasa, Krishna Jeevani, Nandini, Viswapavani, Viswapoojitha and Brindavani. It is also called as Lakshmi Swaroopam, symbolizing Goddess Lakshmi beloved of Lord Vishnu. It is said that where Tulasi is, there Lord Vishnu resides and such place is considered as a Theertha (sacred place). It is considered as an incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi herself and so is called as Tulasi Devi.

Tulasi is compulsory and a must in the worship of Lord Vishnu, since He gets very much pleased when He is worshipped with Tulasi. In Vaishnava Sampradaya, Tulasi is extensively used and no religious ceremony or ritual is complete without Tulasi. Dried Tulasi stems are also used in performing Homas. As per Brahma Purana, it is said that as soon as one gets up from the bed, one should have the darshan of Tulasi plant which is equivalent to having darshan of all scared Theertha in three

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worlds and also equivalent to having darshan of Sri Lakshmi Narayana. One will get absolved from sins with the darshan and pradakshnaa of Tulasi plant.

Even growing, touching, watering, transplanting and fostering Tulasi plant is said to be highly auspicious and meritorious. Lord Maha Vishnu always resides where there is tulasi, Lotus and Salagrama. It is believed that one who worships Lord Vishnu with Tulasi will not take rebirth and will attain salvation. Worshipping Lord Vishnu with Tulasi leaves helps one in getting cured of incurable diseases.

Sacred water (Theertha) given in temples by the priests is called Tulasi Theertham. It is a tradition and a belief that we find people giving Tulasi Theertham to a dying person in the last stages with a belief that the soul will go to heaven. We also find people adding Tulasi branches to the funeral pyre with the belief that it provides sanctity and spirituality to the departed soul. It is said that even Yama Doothas (messengers of Lord Yama) will not dare to enter the house where Tulasi plant is present and worshipped. It is said that worshipping Tulasi is equivalent to taking bath in scared river Ganges and one will get **Ganga Snana Palan**. Taking bath in Ganges River, having darshan of Narmada River and



Tulai Mala

worshipping Tulasi are all equal in merits.

While Tulasi is used in the worship of both Lord Vishnu as well as Lord Siva, one exception we find is that it is not prescribed in the worship of Lord Ganesa except on the day of Vinayaka Chaturthi.

Legends associated with Tulasi

In the story of **Sri Krishna Tulabaram**, Satyabhama, the queen of Lord Krishna prided herself about Krishna's love for her. On the other hand, Rukmini, the principal wife and queen of Sri Krishna was a very humble and devoted wife. Once, Sage Naaradaa tricked Satyabhama into performing a vrata (a ritual), wherein Satyabhama would give away Lord Krishna in Charity to Naaradaa, and when she tried to weigh Him in wealth, Satyabhama, accepted the vrata, gave away Lord Krishna and reclaim the Lord back by weighing Him in wealth. Satyabhama accepted the vrata, gave away Lord Krishna in charity to Naaradaa, and when she tried to weigh Lord Krishna by using all her wealth, the scale did not balance. But when Rukmini placed a leaf of Tulasi on the wealth, the scale balanced perfectly indicating the depth of her own devotion and the purity of Tulasi.

Wedding of Tulasi with Salagrama:

According to Skanda Purana, the wedding of Tulasi with the Salagrama (scared stone



Wedding of Lord Krishna & Tulasi Devi

symbolizing Lord Vishnu) is celebrated in the month of Karthikai on the twelfth day of the waxing moon (Sukla paksha Dwadasi). On this day, the Tulasi pot is decorated with mango leaves, a twig of Gooseberry (symbolizing Sri Krishna) is placed beside the Tulasi twig in the same pot and Pooja is performed. Lamps are lit on five gooseberries and Aarthi is performed to Tulasi and Lord Krishna.

Medicinal benefits of Tulasi

Apart from its religious significance, it is of great medicinal significance, and it is a prime herb in Ayurvedic treatment. Tulasi has been mentioned in **Charaka Samhita**, an ancient book on Ayurveda. Tulasi plant in its entirety is extensively used in Ayurveda in curing various diseases like allergy, skin infections, cold, cough and respiratory infections, heart diseases, stomach disorders, sore throat, ear ache, mouth infections, fever head ache and sleeplessness. It is said to be very effective in viral infections and malaria.

In fact, it is suggested as a good remedy for Swine Flu. It is said that Tulasi is very effective for controlling the Diabetes, kidney related disorders like kidney stones. Tulasi decoction is also used as herbal tea.

Usage of Tulasi also helps in improving memory power. It is considered as a very good Anti-Oxidant that prevents accumulation of bad cholesterol and fights with free radicals in the body. Tulai is believed to be an antidote to Snake venom and other insect bites.

Tulasi is liberally used in the manufacture of shampoos preventing dandruff, soaps and other beauty care products. Among various varieties of Tulasi, Krishna Tulasi is considered to be full of medicinal value. Karppora Tulasi is used in the manufacture of herbal toiletry products. Like an Elephant, Tulai plant is valuable both during and after its life time. Tulasi acts as an anti-bacterial, anti septic, anti-fungal, anti-viral, anti-allergic and is considered as an immuno stimulant. Considered as the Queen of herbs, it is said that where Tulasi is, there Health is.

Tulasi leaves are used in the treatment of ringworm and other skin diseases. Chewing of basil leaves daily makes the skin glow. It also removes acne and other blemishes. With its anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties. Tulasi effectively prevents the breakout of acne on oily skin. It is also used in the treatment of leukoderma.

Tulasi and Environment

Tulasi plant and its leaves with its unique and strong fragrance is said to cleanse the environment and provide a healthy and peaceful atmosphere. It is said that Tulasi plant always releases oxygen into the atmosphere.

It is considered to be effective to sleep in the sacred and healthy ambience of Tulasi plant. It is believed that the presence of Tulasi will ward off the evil spirits from entering the house. During an Eclipse we find people placing Tulasi leaves in the stored water and food to prevent the food and water from getting contaminated due to the pollution caused by the Eclipse. In view of its potential properties to cleanse the atmosphere, Tulasi is liberally grown in industrial areas for prevention of pollution. Fumigation with the dried Tulasi plant repels insects.

Prayers to Tulasi



Tulasi Pratishta at Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam

Lord Krishna along with other demi gods resides with Tulasi Devi. In Kaliyuga, whoever prays or sings Kirtans of Tulasi will attain Krishna's abode.

"Yanmoole Sarva Theerthani Yanmadhye Sarva Devata Yadagre Sarva Vedascha TulaseemTvaam Namamyaham."

Meaning: "I bow down to the Tulasi at whose base are all the holy places, at whose top reside all deities and on whose middle are all the Vedas".

On Sanctity of Tulasi leaves:

"Pushkaratyathi Theerthani Gangathya Sarithasthatha Vasudevadayo Devah Vasanthi Tulasi Thalae."

Meaning: "Sacred waters of all sacred places like Pushkar, River waters of all sacred rivers like Ganges and all Gods starting from Vasudeva are residing in Tulasi leaves".

While plucking the Tulasi leaves, the following Sloka should be chanted and then offered to the Lord:

"Tulasi Amrutha Janmani Sadaatwaam Kesavapriye Kesaavartham Lunaami Thwam Varada Bhava Shobane"

Meaning: "O Tulasi, you were born from a nectar. You are always very dear to Lord Kesava. Now in order to worship Lord Kesava, I am collecting your leaves and manjaris. Please bestow your benediction on me."