

TULASI PARIVAR

Introduction

For thousands of years, Indian culture has accorded a position of great importance to trees, herbs and other components of the natural environment. Our Vedic literature and *puranas* have recognized the importance of plants for the wealth, prosperity and health of human life. Ayurveda, considered to be an additional Veda, has also recognized the therapeutic qualities of trees, shrubs and herbs and their valuable contributions to the maintenance of physical, mental and spiritual health. This is the reason why even in our daily lives we have come to look upon trees and herbs with a kind respect and religious faith. In our country, trees and plants had become an integral part of social life. Most of our religious festivals included worship of trees. Neem, peepul, banyan, asopalav and other trees became indispensable in our lives.

Among all these trees, herbs and shrubs, Tulasi occupies the most respected and sanctified position, from the point of view of health, religion, metaphysics and even decorative value. The Tulasi plant in the courtyard of every Hindu house is a unique symbol of the aesthetic sense, the culture, the sanctity and religious inclinations of the family.

This plant, which grows in all places and under a wide variety of conditions, holds

a position of sanctity and importance in our religion and generally in Indian culture as well. The very name, Tulasi which cannot be compared, the 'incomparable one' indicates its great value. The Tulasi plant is a shrub of great medicinal value. Its position is unrivalled both in religious sacraments and in therapeutic applications. Rearing a Tulasi plant in one's courtyard is considered an essential step towards religious as well as physical well-being. Tulasi has antibiotic property as it augments the capacity of the body to resist and fight diseases; it is potentially useful even against diseases like cancer.

Why Tulasi Parivar?

"With five hundred men, the conquest of India might take fifty years, with as many women, not more than a few weeks", said Swami Vivekananda. This was Swamiji's vision about the future of India and women's role in it. He had the greatest respect for the innate capacities of the Indian women. According to him Indian women are capable to handle their problem. But they must be put in a position to solve own problem in their own way. The present century belongs to organized way of work, said Swamiji. Any work to be successful shall be of collective nature.

Thus the objectives behind forming Tulasi Parivars are to harness the goodness of the women and use it for

the family and national rejuvenation. It shall be achieved:

- a) By creating TULASI PARIVARS with members from all over India and abroad with TULASI PLANT as a focal point of religious, spiritual, cultural and economic rejuvenation of the people.
- b) By enabling the members of TULASI PARIVAR, especially the ladies to actively participate in the social, economic and political issues so that women power gets manifested for a welfare society, as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda.
- c) By conducting *Bhraman Sadhana* (pilgrimages) on an yearly basis to pilgrim and cultural centers of the country and abroad for the members of TULASI PARIVAR to strengthen the global harmony.

Why Tulasi as the Focal Point ?

There was time when the Tulasi plant and its leaves occupied a prime place in our daily life. A small dais in front of the house with a Tulasi plant in it; mother of the house pouring water to the plant in the morning and evening; lighting of an oil lamp in the evening in front of the dais - that was the custom once upon a time in the country. But now a days none seems to be following in this simple ritual. A good number of houses do not have an altar for the Tulasi. Most of the customs of yesteryears have

become a thing of the past. These are superstitions for good number of us. As we move ahead imitating the westerners blindly, we seem to have severed whatever remaining connections we had with Tulasi.

The Story of Tulasi in Puranas

Various sagas of Tulasi are found in numerous legends, tales relating to religious observances and rituals, as well as in many anecdotes narrated in the puranas, our religious scriptures, especially Srimad Devi Bagavatham. Tulasi, though in the form of a plant, is the embodiment of divinity. Because of her intense prema bhakti, she became the most favourite Gopi of Lord Krishna, making even Radha jealous of her. Angered by this Radha finally curses her to be born as an ordinary lady on the earth. Soon Tulasi takes birth as the daughter of Dharmadwaj and Madhavi. They also name her as Tulasi. Carrying forward her vasanas of previous birth, she does severe austerities to be the wife of Lord Krishna. Pleased by her penances, Krishna blesses her to marry one of his amsavataras, Sangachudan, who was Sudharman in the previous birth. Seeing Sudharman's desire to marry Tulasi, Radha had cursed him to be born as a Rakasha. Thus Sudharman takes birth as Sangachudan and marries Tulasi.

Sangachudan who was wearing Krishnakavacham, one ornament of Lord Krishna was invincible. Powered by this he vanquished all on the universe. Soon there was a great battle between Sangachudan and the rest of the Devatas. Finding this Rakhsha, unconquerable, even by the trinity, Vishnu takes the form of a brahmana and obtains the Krishnakavacham from Sangachudan as alms. Despite not wearing it, Sangachudan continued to remain invincible because of the chastity of his wife, Tulasi. Exasperated, Vishnu takes the form of Sangachudan and courts Tulasi. The moment she loses chastity, Sangachudan was killed by the devatas in the battle. When Tulasi comes to know that Vishnu was impersonating as her husband, her anger knew no bounds and curses the lord to turn into a stone. Thus the whole universe came to a stand still forcing Brahma and Shiva to appear before Tulasi and beseeching her to withdraw the curse. Only when Brahma and Shiva assured her that she would still be regarded as chaste and worshipped for ages as a model for chastity and purity, did Tulasi withdrew her curse on Vishnu. Thus Radha's curse turns out to be a blessing in disguise for the residents of earth. Tulasi is also considered as the avatar of Mahalakshmi on the *bhuloka*.

....And from abroad

Tulasi used to be worshipped in the rituals of the Greek church and every year on the birth anniversary of Saint Basil, women used to sanctify their houses scattering Tulasi leaves which have been previously offered in churches inviting the saint's blessing to bestow good fortune on the family in the new year. Tulasi is used as a household remedy in Australia too.

The Medicinal values

The infinite reverence exhibited towards Tulasi in the Hindu religion is not entirely due to unreasoning religious beliefs but rests upon solid scientific foundations. In addition to its extraordinary powers of healing and promoting health. This has been confirmed by the researches of modern chemists, who state that Tulasi possesses a special capacity of killing harmful micro-organism. Thus the wind that carries the fragrance of Tulasi spreads health and well-being wherever it blows.

Astanga Hridayam, the famous Ayurvedic *Text* talks about the importance of Tulasi. Ancient world famous doctors like Charak, Dhanvantari, Sushrut and other great physicians and pharmacologists have unanimously accorded it an eminent position as a therapeutic agent. Tulasi is 'surasa', containing beneficent fluids. Tulasi juice in moderate amounts enhances the physical beauty of a

person. Tulasi is the most effective destroyer of *kapha*(phlegm) and *pitta* (bile) benefits the heart and removes the toxins in the body. Thus use of Tulasi as a medicine, greatly improves the general health.

Tulasi in the eyes of Modern Science

Botanical name of Tulasi is *Ocimum Sanctum Basil*. Western Scientists have come to believe as a result of experiments that Tulasi plant possesses extra electrical energy, which has the effect of keeping the air fresh and pure upto a distance of 200 metres from the plant. It is also found that a special kind of vapour is released by the plant into the atmosphere, which purifies the atmosphere. This is actually an essential oil present in the plant, which evaporates and spreads through the air rendering it free from bacteria and other substances likely to cause diseases. Thus the Tulasi plant reared at the door-steps of a house or its vicinity keeps the air fresh ensuring the health of its occupants.

The recent scientific researches have thrown more light on the wonder plant tulasi. The Science Today, a premier English magazine on Science and Technology in its March 1971 issue, had mentioned that chemical analysis of the tulasi juice showed that it contained 27 mineral salts that a human body requires.

Germs and bacteria cannot be seen by the naked eyes. They attack the cooked food. Tulasi leaves can easily destroy these germs and bacteria. Indian Express, in one of its editions, mentions that if couple of tulasi leaves are kept on the cooked food, it absorb the bacteria and germs. Perhaps this was the reason why our ancestors, kept a tulasi leaves on the food to be offered to the Gods. Researches have revealed that the cheapest and easiest way to purify water is by leaving a couple of tulasi leaves in it. Recently the Fuel Research Institute, New Delhi has come with a startling disclosure that by adding 15 drops of tulasi juice with 1 litre of petrol, the fuel efficiency of petrol increases by 20%!

The issue of 'Gujarat Samachar dt 25.3.88 referred to a study undertaken at the S.V. University, Tirupaty. According to this study, the Tulasi plant exhales ozone, the molecules of which contain three atoms of oxygen, in place of the ordinary atmosphere oxygen, which has only two atoms of oxygen in each molecule. This presence of extra molecule of oxygen has a salutary effect purifying the blood if one inhales the air surrounding the Tulasi.

Tulasi has a salutary effect not only on the body, but also on the thoughts, tendencies and inclinations of the mind. It helps not only in curing physical

ailments but also in promoting purity, sanctity and faith.

Skyscraper Culture pushes Tulasi to the back-yard!

The location of the Tulasi plant in front of the residence of every respectable Hindu house holder has for ages held sway as a symbol of Hindu culture augmenting the spiritual beauty; promoting the material prosperity and well-being of the household. The scriptures enjoin us to look upon Tulasi not as a mere plant, but as the divine representative of Lord Krishna. However, as the apartment and skyscraper culture catches feverish pitch, the sacred Tulasi plants have started disappearing from our houses. One can hardly find a Tulasi plant in any of the modern houses leave alone in the sky-crappers, depriving the inhabitants all the spiritual, medicinal and therapeutic values of the plant.

With the bucket, goes the baby too!

As the educated married couples working in space-starved city skyscrapers and flats are opting for nuclear families, the age-old joint families are slowly withering away from India. This has also resulted in squeezing out the values that bonded the members into the large but well-knit joint families. Thus, mutual suspicion, quarrels, fights, tension, stress etc., have replaced values like mutual love,

respect, patience, tolerance and forbearance in most of the nuclear families, with the result that divorces on petty issues, single parent children, court cases etc., are on the rise in our country.

Bring Tulasi back into the homes!

From the prime location of the Tulasi plant in front of the residence of every Hindu house, the mad rush for modernism has resulted in pushing out the most sacred Tulasi plant from our houses. This has not only deprived the occupants of the great spiritual benefits but also greatly increased the health problems, forcing them to spend thousands of rupees on medicine. Only way to stem the rot is to bring back the Tulasi plant in their daily life. In view of the unrivalled qualities of Tulasi, there shall be a plant in the courtyard of every house. In the case of flats or skyscrapers, the plant can be grown in a pot kept in the balcony / portico of the house to enable the house-holder to worship the plant.

How to Organise Tulasi Parivar ?

The *Tulasi parivar* shall consist of members who regularly worship the *tulasi* plant in the manner mentioned below. Ideally one *parivar* should consist of members of a village or one apartment only. They should meet daily at any convenient place at fixed time to:

- Study and discuss the scriptures like Srimad Bagavata, Ramayana, The *Gita*, The Gospel of Ramakrishna, Complete works of Swami Vivekananda etc.,
- Propagate The Gita
- Practise yoga, meditation and *pranayama*
- Conduct bajans sandhyas
- Discuss the problems of the village / apartment / society to find out possible solutions based on the ideas of Swami Vivekananda. All discussion shall result in an action plan to solve the problem.
- Take up issue and activist based activities at the local level.

Tulasi worship

Every parivar member in her daily routine after morning ablutions shall carry out Tulasi pooja and pray for the bestowal of prosperity, peace of mind and happiness on the family, society and nation. Tulasi pooja shall be performed with utmost humility and honesty by observing total discipline and decorum. The Tulasi plant shall again be worshipped in the evening and a deepak, a small oil lamp, shall be lighted before it. During the four months of the monsoon, designated 'Chaturmas' in the Hindu almanac, the daily worship of Tulasi shall become an important and indispensable religious ritual for the member. The details of the worship are given separately.

Monthly gatherings

Once in a month the members of the Tulasi Parivars of different neighbouring villages or apartments of a town/city shall meet at a convenient place to discuss and formulate course of action plan for social works to be undertaken at the district level. This is to bring cohesiveness, feeling of brotherhood etc., among the parivar members and harness the goodness awakened out of worship of Tulasi.

Yearly gathering

All the members of the parivar shall meet at the Registered office of the Trust at Yerakana Gaddhe, B.R. Hills, Chamarajanagara District, Karnataka once in a year to discuss and finalize action plans for the subsequent years.

Social and National Consciousness thru Tulasi Parivar

Uniformity brings the feelings of unity and equality. When a group of people follow similar customs etc. that instantly unites the minds. Perhaps this is what prompted the ancestors to evolve common customs, methods of worship etc., Rituals like having a dais in front of every home for Tulasi, pouring water in the morning and evening, lighting a lamp in the evening, coming together on a weekly basis at a pre-fixed place to discuss issues of common interest etc., unknowingly bind those people, making them feel that they are all one. In Tulasi

Parivar, Tulasi is the focal point for bringing that feeling.

How to propagate Tulasi?

If we propagate the use of Tulasi, we shall be conferring a very great benefit on the common people. Some of the important considerations in this connection are the following:

- 1) Tulasi should be grown extensively so that it is available in sufficient quantities for medicinal preparations
- 2) Health centres dispensing only medicines prepared from Tulasi should be established.
- 3) Unlike Tea, Tulasi contains no such harmful substance. Hence only Tulasi tea should therefore be taken,
- 4) Tulasi has the power of purifying the atmosphere. If the Tulasi plants are planted on an extensive scale, it will be a valuable contribution to the spread of this natural agency for de-polluting the atmosphere.
- 5) Tulasi has a salutary effect not only on the body, but also on the thoughts, tendencies and inclinations of the mind. Thus Tulasi helps not only in curing physical ailments but also in promoting purity, sanctity and faith.

The rituals

1) **Vandana**

- Suklam bharadharam vishnum
Sasi Varnam chaturbhujam
Prasanna Vadanam Dhyayet
Sarva vigno pashanthayet

2) **Sankalpa**

- Mamopantha Samstha
Durithaskhyadwara
Mahavishnu preerthartham
Kshema sthairyya veerya vijaya
Ayur aarogya abhivridhyartham
Loka kalyanartham cha
Sri Tulasi poojam adhya karishye

3) **Pooja**

a) **Pouring water**

(Sanctify the water with the mantra)

- Gange cha Yamune chaiyva
Godavari Saraswati
Narmada Sindhu Kaveri
Jalensmin sannidhim kuru

(Pour water to Tulasi)

b) **Offering flowers**

Offer flowers repeating the following each mantra 3 times)

- Sri. Tulasyei namaha
- Sri. Vrindavanyei namaha
- Sri. Krishna jeevanayei namaha

c) Doing Pranayama

Mantra:

Pranavasya paramesti parabrama rishihi
paramatma devatha Tulasi gayatri
chandaha pranayame viniyogaha

(do three pranayama – activating the
stomach slow deep breathing with
awareness)

Again repeating the pranayama
circumulate the plant 3 time.)

d) Tulasi Gayathri

Standing in front of the Tulasi, chant the
following mantra at least 9 rounds or in
multiples of 9)

- Sri Tulasyei cha vidmahe
Vishnu priyayei cha Deemahi
Tanno hyamrita prachodayat

4) **Samarpanam**

Offer one rupee coin

5) **Concluding Prayer:**

- Mahaprasada jananeem
Sarvasowbhyagya vardheneem
Aadi vyadhi haraam nithyam
Tulasi nowmi punyadhaam
- Namasthulasi Kalyani
Namo vishu priye shube
Namo moksha prade devi

Nama sampath prayayike

- Mantraheenam Kriyaheenam
Bhakti heenam janardhani
Yatkritam to maya devi
paripoornam tadasthume
- Sarve bhavanthu sukhinaha
Sarve santhu niramaya
Sarve bhadrani pasyanthu
Ma kaschit dhukha bhag bhaveth

Om shanti shanti shanthy

Offer Prostration

ACTION PLAN

Daily basis (individual level)

- Tulasi Pooja
- Bojan Mantra
- Lighting a deepa in front of the tulasi in the evening

Weekly meet (Group)

a) Tulasi pooja (common)	10
minutes	
b) Bajan sandhya	10
c) Swadhyaya	10
d) Discussion on social issues	30
e) Formulation of action plant	10
f) Review last week's activity	5
TOTAL	75
<u>min</u>	

Monthly Meet(Group)

a) Tulasi pooja (common)	10
minutes	
b) Bajan sandhya	10
c) Swadhyaya	10
d) Discussion on social issues	30
e) Formulation of action plant	10
f) Review last week's activity	5
TOTAL	75
<u>min</u>	

- a) In the village each Tulasi Parivar shall form into a Self Help Group to result in empowerment of its members

- b) Social issues can be in health, hygiene, sanitation, child-care, literacy, drinking water etc.,
- c) In cities the social issues can be in the field of Health, Hygiene, Education etc,
- d) Objectives of the action plans for social issues shall be creation of social citizens, social entrepreneurs and social leaders for all this social franchise shall be the strategy.
- e) Monthly meetings shall also celebrate festivals like – janmastami, rakshabandan, vyaspoornima, swami Vivekananda jayanti, Ramakrishna jayanti and Gita jayanti.

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