

The Sacred Tulasī Plant

Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us in The Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 11- In the Skanda Purāṇa there is a statement eulogizing the Tulasī tree as follows: “Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the Tulasī tree, which can immediately vanquish volumes of sinful activities. Simply by seeing or touching this tree one can become relieved from all distresses and diseases. Simply by offering obeisances to and pouring water on the Tulasī tree, one can become freed from the fear of being sent to the court of Yamarāj [the King of death, who punishes the sinful]. If someone sows a Tulasī tree somewhere, certainly he becomes devoted to Lord Krishna. And when the Tulasī leaves are offered in devotion at the lotus feet of Krishna, there is the full development of love of Godhead.” In India every Hindu, even those not belonging to the Vaiṣṇava group, take special care of the Tulasī tree. Even in great cities where it is very difficult to keep a Tulasī tree, people are to be found very carefully keeping this plant. They water it and offer obeisances to it, because worship of the Tulasī tree is very important in devotional service.

In the Skanda Purāṇa there is another statement about Tulasī, as follows: “Tulasī is auspicious in all respects. Simply by seeing, simply by touching, simply by remembering, simply by praying to, simply by bowing before, simply by hearing about or simply by sowing this tree, there is always auspiciousness. Anyone who comes in touch with the Tulasī tree in the above-mentioned ways lives eternally in the Vaikuṅṭha world.”

Tulasī Devī has her form in the topmost spiritual realm of Goloka Vṛndāvana, where she acts in many ways to make the most perfect arrangements for Krishna’s wonderful pastimes with His eternal associates. She appears in this world as a plant, and her very presence invites auspiciousness.

In a letter to Balai devī dāsī, Śrīla Prabhupāda acknowledged, “Yes, Śrī Tulasī is the eternal consort of Krishna, and the most pure devotee,

and therefore, the Tulasī plant is worshiped by Vaiṣṇavas.”

In a letter to: Govinda dāsī, dated April 7, 1970, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote-

My Dear Daughter Govinda Dāsī,

I am so very glad to learn that Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī has favored you so much. If you can actually grow this Tulasī plant, and I am sure you will do it, then you must know it for certain that your devotion for Krishna is testified. I was very much anxious to introduce this worship of Tulasī plant amongst our Society members, but it has not become successful till now, therefore, when I hear that you have got this opportunity, my pleasure does not have any bounds.

Please take care of the Tulasī plants in the following way. This is the best season for growing Tulasī plants. From 15th April to 15th June is the best season for growing this plant. Now I understand that the seedlings are coming out, so the whole spot if possible may be covered by some net because the seedling stage creepers being very delicate are sometimes eaten up by the sparrows, so we have to give a little protection from attack of the sparrows. All the devotees should pour water at least once in the morning before taking prasādam. The watering should not be very much large in quantity, but it should be poured just to keep the ground soft and moist. Sunlight also should be allowed. When the creepers are grown at least 7 inches high, then you can take them out from the planting soil and transplant them in a row in a different place. Then go on watering and they will grow like anything. I think this plant cannot grow in cold countries, but if the plants are dispatched from your place and if the devotees take care of the plant with a little care in a flower pot, then it may grow.

Tulasī leaf is very, very dear to Viṣṇu. All Viṣṇu-tattva Deities require profusely Tulasī leaves. Lord

Viṣṇu likes garland of Tulasī leaves. Tulasī leaves mixed with sandalwood pulp and placed on the lotus feet of the Lord is the topmost worship. But we must be very careful that Tulasī leaves cannot be placed on the feet of anyone else except Lord Viṣṇu and His different forms. Tulasī leaves cannot be placed even on the lotus feet of Rādhārāṇī or on the lotus feet of the Spiritual Master. It is entirely reserved for being placed on the lotus feet of Krishna. We can place, however, Tulasī leaves in the hands of Rādhārāṇī for being placed on the lotus feet of Krishna, as you have seen on the Govinda Album.

I am giving you herewith three mantras for Tulasī Devī as follows:

vrindaai Tulasī devyai priyaai kesavasya ca
Viṣṇubhaktiprade devi satyavatyai namo namah

(We are adding the translation- “I offer my respectful obeisances unto Vṛndā, Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī, who is very dear to Lord Keśava. O goddess, you bestow devotional service to Lord Viṣṇu and possess the highest truth.”)

Śrīla Prabhupāda continues his letter - This is offering obeisances, bowing down (pancanga pranam). And when collecting leaves from the plant, the following mantra should be chanted:

tulasy amṛta janmasi sada tvam kesavapriya
kesavartham cinomi tvam barada bhava sobhane

(We are offering the translation as follows- “O Tulasī, you were born from nectar. You are always very dear to Lord Keśava. Now, in order to worship Lord Keśava, I am collecting your leaves and mañjarīs. Please bestow your benediction on me.”)

In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s original letter to Govinda dāsī, the last line reads kesavarthi cinomi tvam barada bhava sobhane. We were told both spellings and pronunciations are correct.

And Śrīla Prabhupāda continues, Then the mantra for circumambulating the Tulasī tree.

yani kani ca papani brahmahatya dikani ca
tani tani pranasyanti pradaksinah pade pade

(We are also adding the translation, which is “By the circumambulation of Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī, all the sins that one may have committed are destroyed at every step, even the sin of killing a Brahmana.”)

Śrīla Prabhupāda continues- So there are three mantras, one for bowing down, one for circumambulating,* and one for collecting the leaves. The collecting of leaves should be done once in the morning for worshiping and for putting on the plates of foodstuff to be offered. On each bowl or plate there should be at least one leaf. So you follow and practice these Tulasī affairs and you try to distribute your experience to all the other centers, that will be a new chapter in the history of Krishna Consciousness Movement.

Śrīla Prabhupāda added at the bottom of that letter, regarding circumambulating Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī, *3 times round the plant both morning and evening.” This means walking around the plant in a circle, clockwise, with great reverence.

My own experience is that Tulasī will not do well outdoors once the temperature goes below 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave certain input to Govinda dāsī in that letter, like transplanting the young Tulasī plants into rows, and it has to be considered that Govinda dāsī was living in Hawaii. If it rains several days in a row, her soil will become leached of nutrients and she may lose color, so it is best to bring her indoors. She does not like her soil to be very wet, so it is best to water her slowly and gently until the water comes out the bottom of the pot, and do not water her again until moisture can only be detected about an inch and a half below the soil surface. For the winter, or her time spent indoors, it is good to have high quality plant lights. Better to invest in quality, something that will not make her leggy, and where the light actually penetrates the growth canopy. Along with the sparrows that Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions, Tulasī Devī must also be protected from grasshoppers and other worms and insects that

will seem to devour her overnight. Tulasī likes the morning sun especially, and in the afternoon should be protected by a shade cloth or the shadows of trees. Dappled sunlight is very nice. There are two basic varieties of the Tulasī plant, the green type, called the Rāma Tulasī, and the purple variety, called the Krishna Tulasī. The purple variety will turn very dark if she gets stressed from too much sun, and seems to be more sensitive to sunlight than the green variety. She does much better with extra sun protection.

Nectar of Devotion, chapter 22, tells us-

It is said of Krishna's devotees that if they offer even a little water or a Tulasī leaf in devotion to Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Viṣṇu is so kind that He will sell Himself to them.

Tulasī leaves are offered only to the Deity forms of Lord Viṣṇu, not to pictures or to the lineage of spiritual teachers. To have Tulasī Devī in the home is very auspicious, and to have even one Tulasī plant means that the home has become Vṛndāvana. But if there are no home Deities, there must still be arrangement to pick the flowers especially, and to offer them at a friend's home who may have proper deity forms or another bonafide local temple situation. If the flowers are not picked and seeds develop, there will be baby Tulasī plants all over the place which will need to be cared for. They cannot be turned back into the earth. It is a great offense. Think ahead! It is very auspicious to be in the presence of Śrīmatī Tulasī Devī, and there are practical considerations to her care.

For more about Srimati Tulasi Devi please visit:

<http://www.govindadasi.com/Tulasi-devi-beloved-of-krsna.html>

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