

Tulsi: A Linguistic Exploration into its Divinity in Vedic Texts

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Abstract: The word ‘Tulsi’ signifies the incomparable one. Tulsi, also fondly known as Vishnupriya, Pushpakara, Vrinda Devi or Vraja boomi is an indispensable part of daily worship in much of mainstream Hinduism. Tulsi is revered and worshipped especially by followers of Vaishnavism and is also viewed as a form of the goddess Lakshmi or a consort of the god Vishnu (Carbone, 2008). Known as Holy Basil in English and as *Ocimum sanctum*, botanically (Pandey & Madhuri, 2010), the Tulsi plant’s sacredness can be traced back thousands of years ago. Traditionally, the medicinal benefits of the Tulsi plant are well documented. Hence, the current study aims to bring to the fore a dimension less studied which is how meanings are constructed in relation to the divine nature of Tulsi through a linguistic investigation (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014) of the invocations, songs, stories and hymns in the worship of Tulsi Maharani. The semantic system underlying how meanings are made manifest in the sacred Vedic texts and their English retold versions are investigated mainly through an exploration of the construal of interaction, ideation, textuality and evaluation.