

The Sacred Tulasi
SUNDARI SIDDHARTHA
Chennai,
INDIA

Email address: mahagouri@yahoo.com

Abstract: Leaves Trees & Flowers, being an integral part of Nature, are intrinsically entwined with the lives of Human beings. Observing the benefits and the salutary effects of this Nature, Man started revering and worshipping it. The ancient text of the Atharva Veda gives us an indication of this.

1. O Earth, pleasant be thy hills, Snow-clad mountains & forests,
 - Numerous colored, Firm and protected,
 - Earth! On this earth I stand,
 - Undefeated , unslain , unhurt.
2. Whatever I dig out from you, O Earth! May that have quick regeneration again,
May we not damage thy vital habitat & heart.

This worship/ reverence led to the elevation of specific parts and elements of Nature. They were given special attention and protection. This enabled the people to observe them closely and get to know their importance, greatness and usefulness. To differentiate them from the less important aspects of Nature they were referred to and treated as SACRED. Sacred is something pure or holy. What is holy is generally consecrated, set apart or dedicated, religious and so on. Numerous are the sacred Flora, especially in Southeast Asia--- Tulsi, Neem Hibiscus, ginger, edible green leaves. As time went on, these objects and elements were personified; and then their worship became more marked, independent and involved. Tulasi became a goddess, a princess, a queen and was one concrete, important character in the innumerable stories that the Puranas in the Sanskrit Literature abound in. This paper discusses the sacredness of the Tulasi at the different levels in the cultural milieu of the regions ---social, religious, medicinal, herbal, spiritual and agricultural and last but not the least -- ENVIRONMENTAL.