

Plants and flowers play a relatively important role in the Hindu ritual and the elaborated system of rules concerning the suitability and unsuitability of particular flowers for particular gods offers an interesting subject of study in the field of ritual symbolism. This thesis attempts to describe the use of plants in the Hindu puja ritual and their possible symbolic functions. After summing up the present knowledge about the origin of the worship of deities in India in the last centuries of the period of Brahmanism within the Vedic domestic ritual tradition and stating the general similarities and differences between the temple and the domestic versions of the studied ritual, the thesis focuses on the latter, simpler version. A comparison of several primary materials has shown that the structure of the individual ritual acts during the ceremony is fixed and identical for all deities. The pujas for the individual gods and goddesses primarily differ on the level of the pronounced mantras. However, some specifics can be found with the offerings as well, while the most extensive instructions concerning the suitable and unsuitable offerings are those dealing with flowers. The analysis of more than three dozens of such passages has shown that besides a group of flowers which can be used for the worship of deities in general, there are certain "favoured" and "unfavoured" flowers of the individual gods; this is particularly evident in the case of Viṣṇu and Śiva. In some cases, the reasons for the choice remain hidden, while in other cases we seem to have found the probable reasons for the use of a particular flower for a particular god. So far, the results of the work suggest that the system of the use of flowers for the worship of Hindu deities may widely utilize the various properties of the flowers to strengthen the symbolism of the entire ritual while even using methods we know from the classical Sanskrit literature.