SEVEN HILLS AND THE GOD
(Stories from Puranas)

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GRATITUDE

This Book is published with the kind financial assistance extended by the TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS under their scheme Aid to publish Religious Books

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Seven Hills and the God
By N. Appaswamy

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First Edition - 1996
Copies - - - 1000

Price : FREE

For Copies :
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Giripuram
TIRUPATI - 517 507

Printed at :- OMEGA Offset Printers,
61, Bazaar Street, Tirupati. Phone: 23372
FOREWORD

There are Several Stories in the Puranas exemplifying the grace and glory of the Seven Hills and the God over them. All these stories tell us about what happened billions of years ago and in different yugas. They may appear strange and fictitious to us now but it is not so.

Tirumala is undoubtedly the most ancient and sacred shrine on earth. All the Puranas establish this fact. God Sri Mahavishnu chose this place on account of its splendour and beauty. It became sanctified as the God lived on it. Any person visiting Tirumala can feel its divinity and serenity even today.

The stories selected and narrated here reveal the sanctity of the Hills, sanctifying power of the water of the various Theerthas or ponds, especially the Pushkarini or the main tank and above all the glory and ever-extending compassion of the God, Sri Venkateswara, towards his devotees.

While translating the stories from the original Sanskrit, I preferred to present the main story and its gist omitting the elaborate descriptions that may not be liked by the present day readers. The stories have been dovetailed and condensed to keep alive the interest of the reader and to convey the essence of them.

Such stories, besides creating interest and curiosity in the Puranas, will inspire and instill feelings of devotion in the hearts of younger generation.

It is hoped that these stories will receive wider circulation to fulfil the aim in writing them.

_Nynaru Appaswamy._
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THE SACRED HILL

Long time back there was a town by name Nandana to the west of Tirumala. In it was a brahmin named Purandara. He was well versed in Vedas and Puranas. He led a pious life performing all rituals and sacrifices. He had a son named Madhava. He was brought up by his father carefully and he followed his father to become an ideal man. When he grew up into a beautiful youth, Purandara performed his marriage with a charming young girl named Chandralekha. They both loved each other and were leading a happy married life. The spring season came and beautified the nature around. Madhava and Chandralekha were visiting the flower gardens, water-falls and the alluring valleys nearby. During one of those pleasure walks, Madhava met a gypsy girl named Malini. She was beauty personified. He was attracted by her enchanting beauty. He thought that a diamond was precious wherever it was found and so also the gypsy girl was adorable. The girl too was attracted by the beauty of Madhava.

Madhava took his wife to his house and leaving her there returned to the gypsy girl. He expressed his desire for her and begged for her acceptance. He told her that he would live with her as one among the gypsies and he was no longer a brahmin. He thus gained her company and lived with her neglecting his parents and wife. He ate meat, drank toddy and committed thefts joining the gypsies. He never cared for the consequences of leading such base life forgetting his family and moral principles. When he lived for some years like that and became weak, he was neglected by Malini and other gypsies and was thrown out of their company.

Madhava's life became miserable. He realized that he was ruined in both ways. He lost his pious family life as also the gypsy life. The effect of his sins had its sway and he became half-mad. Wandering like a depraved person, he fortunately came near the Seven Hills and started climbing them. The moment he put his first step on the hill, he felt that some
fire was burning in him. Feelings of repentence filled his heart. By the time he reached the top of the hill, all his sins were burnt and devotion to God overflowed his heart. He bathed in the sacred waters of the Pushkarini and worshipped the God of the Seven Hills with complete devotion and praised his boundless compassion. He became a fully changed devotee and returned to his place to the joy of his parents and wife.

The sages who witnessed the power of the Seven Hills and the God in destroying the sins of Madhava the moment he climbed the hills were surprised and praised Tirumala as Venkatachala meaning the sacred hill that destroys all the sins.

(from Bramhanda Purana)
REJUVENATION

Once an aged brahmin was crying for help on Tirumala. His body was very weak and frail. He was hundred years old. His eye-sight was poor. He was unable to walk. He was hungry too. He was calling his disciple, Kaundinya, who went to collect twigs and fruits. He was much agitated and worried.

Just then the Lord of the hills, Sri Venkatachalapathi, who was having a pleasure-walk in the guise of a young man came near the brahmin hearing his bevailings. He asked the brahmin why he was so afraid and distressed? The agitated centurion told the youth that he came from his hermitage along with his disciple, Kaundinya, to collect twigs for the holy fire and fruits for food. They came far away from the hermitage and the disciple had not returned. The time for performing evening rituals was fast approaching and he was incapable of reaching the hermitage without the help of his disciple.

The God in disguise was pleased with the faith of the old brahmin and asked with the radiant smile on his lips "O, revered old man, you are so aged and frail, why do you want to do these rituals, do you wish to live longer"? The old brahmin heard all the enquiries of the God and replied with quivering tone "O kind young man, I am not interested to live longer; but it is my duty to please the Gods with daily rituals and prayers as long as I live. For what else this body is useful now except to worship the God"? The God was pleased with the steadfast faith of the old man and took him to a crystal clear stream nearby and asked him to have a bath in the cool and pure water before going to his hermitage. The old brahmin was immensely pleased with the kind words of the youth. He went into the stream and had a dip in the water. When he rose from the water, to his surprise, he saw that he was transformed into a sturdy and handsome youth of sixteen. Further to his astonishment, he saw the dazzling and universal form of Sri Venkateswara standing before him. Flowers were being showered on the Lord of the hills by the celestial beings from
heaven. They sang hymns and songs in praise of the omniscient and compassionate God. The rejuvenated brahmin prostrated at the feet of the God and prayed with all devotion and reverence. The supreme God blessed and asked him to live happily performing his daily rituals and prayers. Before the brahmin could open his eyes, the God disappeared.

The holy stream, which gave new life to the brahmin with the grace of the God, was named 'Kumara Dhara' or the stream of youth by the celestial beings. It is still believed that those who take a holy dip in this stream thrice a day for three months will get back their youth and vigour.

(from Varaha Purana)
THE CHASING DEMON

Once there lived in Maharashtra a pious brahmin named Yajna Deva. He was well versed in Vedas and scriptures and led a life pure and humble. He had a son named Sumati. Though he was brought up well by his father, Sumati went astray due to bad company. He left his father and wife and went away to Orissa and was attracted by a forest-woman, who was a prostitute. In order to please her, he became a robber and was giving all the stolen things to her. One day Sumati went with other robbers to the house of a holy brahmin and killed him to steal the valuables from the house. When he came out of the house, a fearful demon confronted and wanted to devour him. It was the demon arising from the murder of a brahmin. Sumati ran for safety but the demon chased him from behind.

Running from pillar to post, Sumati some how reached his father's house and fell at his feet crying "father save me from this demon, I have no other help, you alone should save me". In a short time the demon also reached the place and said "Yajna Deva! Your son has committed all kinds of sins he became a drunkard, he became a robber, he lived with a prostitute and above all these detestable acts, he killed a pious brahmin and robbed his house. I have to devour him as a punishment for this savage act". Yajna Deva was horrified at the demon's words and felt angry at his son. But Sumati was holding his feet and praying for protection. Sumati's mother and wife were full of tears for the danger that awaited him. Fatherly affection slowly crept into Yajna Deva and he said to the demon "I agree that my son has committed all the sins, but he is my only son, what will happen to my daughter-in-law, if he is dead? So please leave him, I will see that he makes amends for his sins". The demon did not agree for that and it wanted to swallow Sumati then and there.

Just then, to the good fortune of Sumati, came there
Sage Doorvasa. Both Yajna Deva and Sumati prostrated before him and begged for his mercy and show them the way to get rid of the danger from the demon. Doorvasa thought for a while and told Yajna Deva that the sins committed by Sumati were such there was no remedy for them. However there was only one way to get rid of the sins and the demon. That was to worship Sri Venkateswara and have a holy bath in the sacred Pushkarini on Sri Venkatachala. So saying the sage left the place.

Leaving no time for delay, Yajna Deva and Sumati repeating the sacred name of Sri Venkateswara without any gap or stop started to Tirumala. The demon could not go near Sumati as he was chanting the sacred name of the God, but it followed him to have its chance, if he stopped his prayer. When Yajna Deva and Sumati reached the foot of the Seven Hills and started climbing them, the demon was immobilized and lost its power.

Yajna Deva and Sumati reached the top of the hill with full devotion to God. They both got their heads tonsured and bathed in the holy waters of the Pushkarini. They worshipped the Lord of the Seven Hills, Sri Venkateswara and sought his refuge. Sumati prostrated before the God and repented for his past life. He took a vow before the God that he would lead his further life in the right path serving his parents. When they worshipped the god for some time, they heard an invisible voice saying "Sumati ! Your sins have been washed away by the holy waters of the Pushkarini and your surrender to God. You can now go and lead a new life doing good to others". Yajna Deva and Sumati were happy to hear the words. They offered their prayers to God again and again and returned to their place. Sumati was a changed man from thenceforth.

(from Skaanda Purana)
TOPSYTURVY

Once sages Narada and Tumbura were journeying through the void singing songs in praise of Srimannarayana. Narada saw Tumbura playing on a stringed instrument studded with gems and diamonds instead of his usual wooden instrument. He asked Tumbura how he got such a beautiful instrument. Tumbura told Narada that it was given to him by King Pracheenabarishu for singing songs in praise of him. Narada was unhappy with the answer. He told Tumbura "What a detestable act you have done? Is it proper on your part to praise a king instead of God Narayana even for a minute. You have to reap the consequences of such an unholy act". So saying Narada cursed him to lose all powers and fall on earth topsyturvy.

The curse of Narada had its immediate effect. Tumbura came down to earth topsyturvy and fell in a dense forest on Sri Venkatachala. There was a holy pond named Pronatheertha where Tumbura fell. As Tumbura was wise enough in repenting for his lapse and praying Sri Narayana while falling down, he was not hurt. He immediately took a holy dip in that sacred pond and started meditating upon the Lord of the Seven Hills. He worshipped Sri Venkatachalapaty with utmost faith and devotion, observing all austerities for one complete year.

God Srinivasa was pleased with the worship of Tumbura, who had enough retribution for his unholy act. On the full moon day of Phalguna month, the God appeared in his divine form with Goddess Lakshmi adoring his chest and kindness spreading from his beautiful looks. He called Tumbura and asked what was his wish. Tumbura opened his eyes and saw the God Srinivasa extending his blessing hand and kind smile. He prostrated before the God and praised him uttering his thousand names. He then humbly said "O, God of the Seven Hills, Lord Srinivasa! how kind you are! You came to bless me forgiving my fault. How can I praise your greatness and kind compassion fully! I repent for my folly and beg for
your mercy. O, God bless me with the power to sing and praise your glory alone as long as I live”.

All the sages, celestial beings came there to have the opportunity of seeing the glorious form of God Srinivasa. They all offered their prayers to the God and worshipped him with folded hands and surging devotion.

God Srinivasa blessed them all and said "Tumbura you have been relieved of your fault by the holy waters of this Pronatheerthta and also by your unflinching devotion and worship. You will get back your original powers and you can be in the company of Narada". The God also asked the sages and celestial beings present there to take a holy bath in that sacred pond. At the request of Tumbura, the God said that the Pronatheerthta will be called Tumbura theertha thenceforth. So blessing all of them, the God disappeared.

All the sages and celestial beings bathed in the holy pond and felt refreshed and invigorated. They left the place thanking Tumbura for giving them such an opportunity. Tumbura got back his powers and went away to join Narada in the higher regions.

(from Bramhanda Purana)

**KIND MOTHER**

A brahmin lived in a village in the central region of Andhra Kingdom. He was a pious man well-versed in Vedas and scriptures. He was leading his life as a good purohit. He had a son named Atmarama. The boy too was brought up as a Vedic scholar. He was assisting his father in all the activities. When his father died, Atmarama became an orphan. His life became miserable. He left the village and went from place to place. So wandering he came nearer to the holy hill of Venkatachala. He took his bath under the waterfall of Kapilatheertham and worshipped Kapileswara. He then
climbed the hill taking a holy dip in every sacred pond that he came across.

He reached the top of the hill and took rest under a tree. He thought of his misfortune and helpless condition. He was distressed for not being able to perform the holy rituals as ordained by his ancestors. He was full of sorrow for not worshipping the God properly. After resting for some time, he woke up and went in search of fruits for quenching his hunger. In a cave nearby he saw a sage immersed in penance. He was shining like a burning fire. Brilliance was radiating from his body. He was none other than the great sage Sanatkumara.

Atmarama went near the sage and prostrated before him. With tears rolling down from his eyes he said "O, great sage! I am a destitute. I do not know what sins I had committed in my previous birth. I am reaping those consequences now, have pity on this poor person and show me the way to salvation".

Sanatkumara looked at Atmarama for a minute and then closed his eyes. After meditating for some time, he opened his eyes and told Atmarama "My dear young man! You are really undergoing the results of sins committed in your previous birth. You did not perform any good deeds in your past life. You did not help anyone and did not give even a pie in charity. You gave troubles to others. Hence this miserable life to you in this birth". Atmarama repented for his past life and requested the sage to show him the way out.

Sanatkumara took pity on Atmarama and said "Sri Mahalakshmi, consort of Narayana is our mother, who can relieve us from the past sins and any troubles. She has three powers, those of giving wealth, fame and victory. She would be pleased with sincere devotion. Therefore, you worship her with complete faith and get her blessings". So saying he taught him the secret mantra for meditation and disappeared to the surprise of Atmarama.
Atmarama was happy for the way shown to him by the great sage. He went to the holy pushkarini and had a dip. He went into a garden nearby, sat under a tree and started meditating on Sri Mahalakshmi as advised by the sage Sanatkumara. One day, when he opened his eyes after meditation, to his astonishment he saw a beautiful sanctuary before him. In it were Sri Venkateswara and his two consorts Sri Devi and Bhudevi. Dazzling light was spreading from them and they were showering blessing smiles. Atmarama was filled with ecstasy and prostrated before the God of Seven Hills and his consorts. His heart was filled with boundless joy and devotion. Sri Venkateswara blessed him with his kind looks and said, "O, Atmarama! you have worshipped Sri Devi with full faith and she is pleased with your devotion. All your sins have been mitigated and you have been blessed with riches and knowledge. You can now lead a happy life". When Atmarama opened his eyes and stood up, to his bewilderment the God and his consorts were not to be seen. He stood motionless and praised the God for his kindness and mercy.

Atmarama then lived near the holy hills with all riches and comforts. He spent his life worshipping Sri Venkateswara and his consorts. He helped the poor and needy and gained the affection of God.

(from Varaha Purana)

INGRATITUDE OF MAN

Once there was a king by name Nanda. He was a very good ruler. He followed the teachings of Vedas and Puranas in ruling his kingdom and made his people happy. When he became old, he crowned his son, Dharmagupta, as his successor and went to forests to lead an ascetic life.

Dharmagupta followed his father in ruling the people. He made several sacrifices to please gods and get their blessings.
One day King Dharmagupta went to a forest for hunting wild animals, which were causing hardships to the people living nearby. Chasing wild animals, he went far away from his retinue in that dark forest. He did not notice that it was late in the day and the shadows of night were creeping in on all sides. He was thus left alone in the forest. In order to save himself from the wild animals in that night, he climbed a tree and was resting on it.

After some time a bear, chased by a ferocious lion, came running and climbed up the tree on which Dharmagupta was resting. The lion too came running and waited under the tree watching the bear. The bear quivering with fear saw Dharmagupta resting on the tree. To the surprise of Dharmagupta, the bear spoke in human tongue and asked Dharmagupta not to be afraid of it. The bear asked him to see the waiting cruel lion below and be careful. The bear further told Dharmagupta that it would be watching the lion upto midnight and he could sleep during that period and then it would be his turn to watch from midnight. Dharmagupta was pleased with the agreement and slept. After some time the lion too spoke with human voice to the bear and asked it to throw down Dharmagupta so that it could eat him and go away. The bear did not agree for that and told the lion that it was a heinous act to deceive a trusted person. As per the agreement, Dharmagupta woke up at mid-night and asked the bear to sleep. When the bear was fast asleep, the lion then asked Dharmagupta to throw down the bear so that it could eat it and go away, otherwise it would wait under the tree until both of them drop down dead. Dharmagupta was afraid of the lion's determination and threw the bear down. Fortunately the bear, while falling down caught hold of a branch and saved itself from the danger.

The bear managed to go near Dharmagupta and said to him angrily "O, King! You are a cheat, you wanted to throw me down without considering the trust I kept in you. I did not do so when the lion tempted me with such words. I am not really a bear. I am a descendant of Maharshi Bhrugu and I have the power of taking any form I like. My name is Dhyananishta."
Since you wanted to deceive me with a crooked mind, you will become mad and suffer for you unpardonable sin".

The bear immediately turned into Dhyananishta and said to the lion "O, king of animals! you are not a lion, you were the minister of the Yaksha King, Kubera, and your name was Bhadranama. Once you went with your wife to Himalayas and were immersed in amorous pleasures near the hermitage of Maharshi Gautama. He came out to collect sacred grass and saw you naked near his hermitage. He therefore got wild and cursed you to become a lion for violating the sanctity of the place". As soon as Dhyananishta completed his words, the lion turned into Bhadranama and bowed to him with reverence. Bhadranama told Dhyananishta that what all he said was true and on repeated requests, Gautama became kind and assured him that he would be relieved of the curse on meeting Dhyananishta. Bhadranama once again paid his respects to him and went away to Alakapuri, the city of Kubera.

The retinue of Dharmagupta came searching for him and found him mad. They took him to his father, who was leading ascetic life on the banks of river Rewa. Nanda felt sad for the pitiable condition of his son, took him to Maharshi Jaimini and prayed for showing the way to make his son free from the curse of Dhyananishta. The Maharshi thought for a while and told Nanda that the only way for relief was to go to the sacred hill, Venkatchal and worship the God of the Hills after bathing in the holy pushkarini there. The holy water of the pond had the power of washing away all sins and curses.

Nanda went along with his son and ministers to the most sacred shrine on earth, Venkatchala. They all bathed in the holy water of the Pushkarini and worshipped the God of the Hills, Sri Venkateswara, with hearts filled with complete faith and devotion. To their great wonder and relief, Dharmagupta got rid of his madness and became a normal person. He prayed the God again and again for his mercy. They all then returned to their kingdom. Nanda went to his hermitage to continue his penance. Dharmagupta ruled his people well never forgetting to worship Lord Venkateswara.

(from Skaanda Purana)
HOLIER THAN ALL HOLY RIVERS

Sankhana was the King of Kambhoja State. As a result of his omissions and commissions, he was defeated by his subordinates and exiled. Wailing for his mis-fortune, the King went on a pilgrimage with his wife and trusted ministers to the holy places in the south. He came to Sri Kalahasthi and had a holy dip in the river Suvarnamukhi and worshipped God Iswara. Resting under trees, the king wept for his helpless and unfortunate condition and thought it was better to die than to live such a miserable life. Just then he heard a mysterious voice asking him to go to Tirumala, the holy shrine of God Venkateswara, which was very near and worship the merciful God performing the daily rituals and bathing in the sacred pushkarini, the holy tank there.

The King started immediately with his wife and ministers and reached Tirumala. The sacred hill was beautiful with various kinds of trees, flower plants and creepers, innumerable birds and animals. Streams of pure and cool water were flowing making musical sounds. The king and his party made their way to the holy Pushkarini and were living there performing the daily rituals thrice a day after holy bath in the refreshing waters of the pushkarini. The King worshipped the God of the Hills with steadfast faith and devotion for six months. The changing climate and its effects did not deter him from his unflinching devotion and worship.

One day when the king was offering morning prayers to the Lord at the holy tank, to the surprise of one and all God Venkateswara came up from the centre of the tank with his two consorts on either side. The light radiating from the God and his consorts spread far and wide mesmerising the devotees. All the celestial beings and saints came there to see the God and offer their prayers. The King knelt before the God with complete devotion and prayed for his blessings. The God with his radiant smile and sweet words told the king that all his sins were washed away by the holy waters of the tank and he would soon get back his Kingdom. So blessing the God dis-
appeared with his consorts.

The King returned with his wife and ministers to his kingdom. There, all the subordinates, who dethroned the king, quarrelled among themselves and died in the internal-battles. The people of the kingdom were searching for a king. They were happy to see their king returned and invited him with all honours. Sankhana was crowned again as the king of Kambhoja and he ruled the state as an ideal king.

The waters of the holy tank are holier than the waters of all rivers. Those who take bath in this holy tank and worship the God will be blessed with riches and their wishes will be fulfilled by the grace of God Venkateswara.

(from Varaha purana)
MUD AND GOLD

King Thondaman once asked his family priest Angirasa what was the best method to please the Lord of the Seven Hills, Sri Venkateswara. Angirasa told him that the God Venkateswara likes Tulsi leaves best and he would be pleased if any one worshipped him chanting his thousand names and offering Tulsi leaves. In order to please the God still more easily, Thondaman got one thousand Tulsi leaves prepared with gold and studded with gems and diamonds. He was worshipping the God with those gold Tulsi leaves daily chanting his thousand names. This went on for three months but the God was not pleased. So Thondaman after completing his worship told before the image of the god "O God! I am worshipping you with gold Tulsi leaves and still you are not pleased". There was no response to his words. Next day when he came to worship the God, he found Tulsi leaves made of mud at the feet of God over the gold Tulsi leaves. Thondaman got angry to find so. He removed all the leaves of mud and worshipped with gold leaves and went home. Next day when he came to worship the God, he found that the gold leaves were thrown aside and the leaves of mud were at the feet of the God.

Thondaman now understood that the God was not pleased with his worship. So he prostrated before the God and submitted to him "O God! why are you not pleased with my worship and who is the devotee worshipping you with these leaves of mud and pleasing you? Kindly let me know my faults so that I can get rid of them". He then heard the words that came from the God "O Thondaman! you offered the gold Tulsi leaves with an air of pride but not with complete devotion and surrender to me. I would be pleased with true devotion only but not with pomp and pride. A poor potter by name Bheema living in a village ten miles away from this place is coming daily through underground passage and worshipping me with Tulsi leaves made of mud. I am pleased with his devotion filled with love and accepting those leaves". Thondaman realized his
vanity and prayed the God to forgive his folly and shower kindness.

King Thondaman then went to the village where Bheema, the potter, was living. He discarded all his royal pomp and went like an ordinary person. On reaching the house of the potter, the King fell motionless near the potter. Bheema felt sad for the King's position. He immediately chanted Sri Venkateswara's sacred names and prayed for the King's recovery. The King became conscious and praised the potter for his true devotion to God. Just then God Venkateswara appeared there with Maha Lakshmi to the surprise of all. Bheema prostrated before the God and said "O Lord! How kind are you? You came to this poor potter's house. I am not equal to any great devotee. I am a humble potter worshipping you with leaves of mud; even then you came with all compassion; bless me with the opportunity to worship you and your devotees throughout my life". Bheema's wife, Tamalini, also bowed to the God and prayed the Lord with boundless devotion as Draupadi prayed the Lord in times of distress. She offered the rice cooked by her to the God and his consort. They ate it without any hesitation and blessed Bheema and Tamalini and sent them to Vaikunta, the abode of God.

Thondaman, who witnessed the liberation of the potter and his wife, fell at the feet of God and prayed for his blessings. The God told him that he would get another life after his death and then attain the divine abode. The God and Goddess disappeared to the surprise of all.

Thondaman immediately went to Tirumala and after taking a holy bath in the Pushkarini sat for meditation. After some time he breathed his last and had another birth. In that life he spent all his time in worshipping the God of the Seven Hills and finally attained liberation to reach the eternal abode of the Lord.

(from Varaha Purana)