

ETERNAL GLORY OF TIRUMALA TIRUPATI SHRINE

English Translation

Prof. M. Rajagopalachary

Telugu Original

Sri G.T. Soori



**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati.
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Editor

Dr. Akella Vibhishana sarma

Special officer,

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J.SYAMALA RAO, I.A.S.,

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FOREWORD

The book aims to bring the highest glory of this shrine within the easy reach of common men. Shaastras ordain that Narasimha in Kruta Yuga, Dasharatha Rama in Treta Yuga, Krishna in Dwapara Yuga, and Venkateshwara in Kali Yuga are the Paripurna Avataras

**Krutetu Narasimhabhut, tretayam
raghunandanah,
Dwapare Vasudevascha kalou
venkatanayakah!!**

In this Kaliyuga Lord Sri Maha Vishnu left Vaikunta and is said to reside in the Ananda Nilayam of Tirumala to protect His devotees. That is why Tirumala is regarded as the Vaikunta of the Kaliyuga upon the earth.

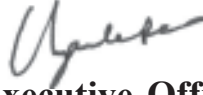
This book narrates in a systematic order the episodes like the cause of manifestation of Lord of Venkatadri, the wedding of Padmavati, construction of Ananda Nilayam, etc. on the basis of Vedic scriptures and epics.

Mr. G.T.Soori has browsed different epics and has visited the shrine. He has collected a lot of data and has written the book in Telugu entitled, “Tirumala Tirupati Kshetra Mahatmyamu” deserves congratulations. The book was published in the year 2000 by the TTD, Tirupati subsequently has been reprinted Several times.

Keeping in view the demand for the book, it is felt that this book needs to be published English & Hindi also to reach a wider audience. Prof. M. Rajagopalachary, Kakatiya University, Warangal has translated the book into English in a simple, lucid style so that the readers can easily understand the subject, I congratulate him for his excellent work. We hope the critics and readers will receive the book with due regard as ever.

I appreciate Dr.Akella Vibhishana Sarma Special Officer, Publications Division, TTD, Tirupati for Publishing this book.

In the Service of Lord Venkateswara



Executive Officer

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams
Tirupati

Introduction

(Tirumala Tirupati Kshetramu-Mahatmyamu)

I wrote earlier *Sri Kalahasti Kshetra Mahatmyamu* which was published by the Executive Officer of Sri Kalahastishwara Temple with the permission of the Endowment Commissioner, Government of AP. Many pilgrims and friends felt that this book was greatly useful to the pilgrims. In this context, they suggested that if I write about the Glory of Tirumala Tirupati Shrine as well, it would be of great use to the pilgrims in understanding the story of Lord Sri Venkatachalapati in detail, and encouraged me in this task.

For this purpose, I stayed in Tirumala and Tirupati for some time and elicited the opinions of the pilgrims by moving with them. I visited all the important sacred water bodies (tirthas). I enquired with the pilgrims staying in the Tirupati temple cottages about their details of pilgrimage, experiences, and requirements.

Many pilgrims informed that they were not aware of the glory of Sri Venkatachalam, the prominent tirthas in it, the manifestation of Venkatachalapati on the earth, his marriage with Padmavati Devi, the habitation of Padmavati Devi separately in Tiruchanuru and other issues in a systematic order. They felt it is better to write also about the construction of the Ananda Nilayam in Tirumala. They are aware of the story of

the shrine and its glory to some extent through the *Illustrated Story of Venkateshwara Swami* (*Venkateshwara Swami Bommala Charitra*) containing the brief story approved by Swami Chinmayananda. So, I grasped all the important points from *Vaishnava Kandas* of *Varaha Purana*, *Bhavishyottara Purana*, and *Skandha Purana*. I have written this book in tune with the taste of the pilgrims on the basis of the story told by the ancients down the generations. It is left to the readers to judge my success or else in this task. I have written the story briefly without leaving the important concerns.

I have read the TTD book on *Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyamu* and Sri Chinmayananda Swami's approved *Venkateshwara Swami Bommala Charitra* (booklet) for the glory of the shrine and its sacred tirthas. I am grateful to those authors and publishers.

Lord Venkateshwara Swami is manifested as a worship idol in Ananda Nilayam with Lakshmi and Padmavati Devi on both sides of his chest. There is a tradition that the pilgrims should first bathe in the Kapila Tirtham, and later they should visit, one by one, the Kapileshwara, ascend the hill of Venkatachala, take a holy dip in the Holy Lake (Swami Pushkarini), visit Varaha Swami and then only visit Sri Venkatachalapati. I have examined what the Puranas said in this regard besides taking into account the opinions of the pilgrims. Keeping all this in view, I have written the story of Lord Venkateshwara in brief.

My friend GV Narasimha Rao has a bachelor's degree not only in Sanskrit, Telugu and English but also in Law. He is a great man who can deliver discourses on the Hindu dharma and the Vedic ordained duties in the Rigveda with relevant illustrations. He obtained a Raja Iyer gold medal from Andhra University. He encouraged me to take up this task of writing the book by giving me *Vaishnava Kanda* of the *Skandha Purana* and enlightening me about some special issues related to the subject and wishing me well. May Lord Venkateshwara bless him with longevity, health and wealth.

- G.T. Soori

Translator's Note

The book is a translation into English of the Telugu work, *Tirumala Tirupati Kshetram-Mahatmyam* written by Sri G.T. Soori.

The glory of Lord Sri Venkateshwara manifested at Tirumala shrine is beyond human comprehension. It is said that there is no Lord equivalent to Venkateshwara either in the past or present, nor will there ever be one in the future. The Lord's abode, Tirumala, is regarded as the heaven on the earth. It appears Garuda himself has brought the Kreedadri from the Vaikuntha to Tirumala as per the orders of the Lord. A modest attempt is made in this book to describe the glory of the Lord, His shrine and the sacred water bodies present on Tirumala, as enunciated in different Puranas like *Varaha Purana*, *Bhavishyottara Purana*, *Skandha Purana*.

The book is divided into two main parts. In the first part, it describes the stories associated with the Tirumala hills and the prominent Tirthams on it. It is episodic in narration. The Kreedadri brought by Garuda to the earth has come to be known as Vrushabhadri, Sheshadri, Anjanadri, Venkatadri and Garudadri in different Yugas. The book gives their background stories as to how these names came into vogue. For example, the name Vrushabhadri was obtained due to the penance of a giant named Vrushabha in the Kruta Yuga. The name Sheshadri

was a result of the tussle between Vayu and Shesha. Because of the manifestation of Lord Sri Venkateshwara on the hill, it acquired the name of Venkatadri. Hundreds of divine water bodies (Tirthams) like Kapila Tirtham, Swami Pushkarini, Akasha Ganga, Papanashini, Kumaradhara, Pandava Tirtham, Tumburu Tirtham, Ghona Tirtham, etc., are flowing down the hills of Tirumala. This book describes quite interestingly all the stories associated with the eleven significant Tirthams.

In the second part, it delineates the entire story of the manifestation of Lord Vishnu as Venkatachalapati on Tirumala and his marriage with Padmavati in vivid detail. It includes many events like the Bhrigu's test to decide the most sattvic god eligible for oblation in the Sacrifice among the triumvirate of primeval gods, Brahma, Maheshwara and Vishnu, Lakshmi and Vishnu deserting Vaikuntha and heading for Kolhapuram and Venkatachalam respectively, Chola king's curse, union of Srinivasa and Varaha Swami, Vakulamalika's assistance, past life stories of Akasha Raju and Tonadaman, Srinivasa's encounter with Padmavati in the garden, past life of Padmavati, Srinivasa forecasting the fortune of Dharani Devi in the guise of a female soothsayer, Vakula's mediation for the marriage, Brihaspati fixing the auspicious muhurtam for marriage, Shuka presenting the marriage card to Srinivasa, invitation to all the gods and angels, Srinivasa taking loan from Kubera for the marriage, the marriage of Srinivasa and

Padmavati, the new couple staying at the hermitage of Agastya, Akasha Raju's demise, Srinivasa's successful conciliation of Tondaman and Vasudhan for the partition of kingdom, Tondaman's past life as Rangadasu, Tondaman's construction of temple for the Lord, Kurmudu's past life, Tondaman's liberation, etc. Conclusion is given at the end.

While translating the book, adequate care is taken to present the matter in a simple, easy-to-read language for the benefit of all. The language is unambiguous, precise and direct avoiding round-about involuted expression unlike the Telugu prose which uses complex, compound sentences, and a descriptive and ornate style. My translation remains faithful to the original text in Telugu. I thank the Executive Officer, TTD for giving me the opportunity to translate the book.

Prof. M. Rajagopalachary

Om
Sri Srinivasaya Namaha

The Glory of Tirumala Tirupati Shrine

First Chapter (*PrathamaShwasamu*)

1. Eulogy for favour (*Prastuti-Upakarya*):

Sharanam bhava me nityam Srinivasa Jagatpate

Shardhulamu

Srimatkomala panipallavamulan jennara mai
pulkalan
bremamodamu sanghatincucu alarmelmanga
yottanga su
sthemarogyakarambuga bhavabhayodrekambulan
bapuma!
Swami! Mee caranambule sharana meesha!
Venkatesha prabhu!

Mattebhamu

Okacetan badayugma me gatiga, mammodarpa
verokkatan
sakalahladakarabhayam bosagucun santosha
mepara, ve
roka yugmambuna shankhacakramu lato noppari,
yuppongu ma
maka cittambuna nilci provagadave! ma venkatesha
prabhu!

Sisam

Sri Venkateshwara! Sritajanamandara!
manujudai mi seva manunevadu?

matabhedamulu leka satata mellaru ninnu
jalaga goluvare meluganare?
devatalegaka deshambula
martyu lellaru nidu marugu jorare?
Arcalenniyo dhatri namariundenu gani
Ghanamaina meeshakti gananendu

Gitam

Nastikundunu nee bhiti kaastikunde,
tittubotunu neeyeda tirthavasi
Varada! Paramesha! Needu sarvajnyatadi
sugunajalambu nitagada coodavalayu.

Utpalamalika

Sriramaniamai migula jittamu ranjila
srushtijeyucum goreduvarikim dananu goriki
diragajudajeyucun leranu varalum ganaka ledanunatlu
natincucun, sada variki varikim dagu navaritamaina
phalambulam daggam goorici dasseno yanaga
gumbhini veedkoni palasandramun jeri, ramalalama
goriki dira bhogamulagooducu badatalambu lottucun
sarapu dammulambu manasaraga moviki
niccucundaga goorukubatti vicikala kundalishayyanu
nolaladu, o nirajanabha! Vinnapamu neekide!
lokamu, bhoomi vittamul, daralu putrapoutrulu,
nitanta sukhambu, li saravihina soukhyamula sandadi
namadi bondakunda, samsara payodhi nidupada
sarasapotamubatti dataga goriti; nigoodhapu maya
nadetlu korikal serakayundu cittamuna? Chinmaya
ee kalikalamandu ne goreda padasevayunu goreda
mokshamu nee bhavambunan sarapu girtiyun,

damamu, sadhula poojayu, tirtha seva, yimparaga
nidu kirtanamu bhava bhavakshaya mishah seya, nin
jerani vittamattulanu, cillara velpula golvaninka, na
neramu lenniyunna navi ni mahimambuna vammulai
canun sareku sarekum dalatu sarapu daivamu
nivatancu na varini goranayya! Ika varini mirina niva
vinikim dirani bandhavundavura dinadayalu!
amayakunda, nenera bhajimpa ninnu nika nikkamu
ninnu nammi te tiruna gatuvo teliya deva! Mukunda!
Dharapati! Nanun; Bharatadesha mantatiki bhagyapu
rashi, telungunadu nikaraya britipatramu
mahamahimancita Venkateshwara! Arasi
provumayya! Mamu nadaranambuna, sarvasoukhya
sambharamu goorci deshaparipalana dharmamu
nitimantamai bharata mitradeshamulu vayani maitrini
andadandaga jerisahayamiya, arijibu taranyamu lendi
nundaga bharamu taggi bhoomi kadu pavanamai
celaganga jeyuma! O Raghurama! Rama!
Sugunojjwaladhama! Ramabhirama! Om.

Gitam

Venkatadrisha! Srisha! Sarvesha! Asha
to ninu bhajiyintu nanisha menu asha
dircuma paramesha! Sritasudhi nivesha!
Urvi 'sarvejana ssukhino bhavantu!'

Kandam

Sadgati paramuna jekona
nudgadhayashammu dhatri nonagoodutakun
hrudgata doshamu vayaga
madguru kandooru krushnamaryun golutun!

Kandam

Paramartha molla nellaru
 Varasamshayagunamu vaya vasiga gita
 Bharitarthasara tamamagu
 Caramarthamu telupu krushna sadguru dalatun.

Gitam

Nannayadi kavivarula natu lonarci
 Potanamaty bhaktini porali porali
 Peddanadula kavyala suddu lerigi
 Truptiga kavula runamu dircukonti.

Gitam

Kalidasuni kavyalu kalavarinci
 kanvamuni patraposhana kalanu ganci
 meghasandeshamandali melu delisi
 pranatu lonarintu kavini na prabhu vatancu.

Gitam

Netinavyasahityana nerpu telipi
 Andhra bhashabhiv[ddhiki adanu galuga,
 Kalamu sagincu navyandhra kavula kepudu
 Ayurarogya bhagyambu lalarunatlu,
 devadevuni prarthintu dinadinambu.

Gitam

Pekku prakriyala telungu pempunonda,
 Racana gavincu yuvakavi ratnamulaku
 vani vakkuna nilci avaritamuga
 telugubhashanu deshala velugunatlu
 ceyugavuta mani nenu cetuletti
 mrokkucunnada o andhra poojyulara!

Sisam

Tirumala Tirupati divya bhoolokana
 Vaikuntha manucundu vaishnavundu
 Vaishnavamayaye vardhille sarvatra
 tappincukonaleru tapasulaina
 papamul podroli patitula rakshimpa
 baramatmu dokkade sthira matancu
 vedadu leppudo velayince ni suddi
 gamanimpa nadanide galige nipudu

Gitam

Hindu dharmoddharanamandu heenudaina
 manuju devvadu ledanta manaku munupu
 rantidevudu vivarinci, Shantipatham
 coope; adigada mana bata soorulara!

Gitam

Sthiramu tirumala tirupati Kshetramahima
 Janu teluguna racyinci sarasu lella
 Mudamu jendaga jeyuta moksha mancu,
 Vedavedantavedyu Sri Venkateshu
 Pada sannidhanambuna baramabhakti
 Ankitam bidu di k[ti andhrulara!

2. Introduction (Prastavana)

Auspicious Tirumala Tirupati shrine is the crest-jewel adorning India. The Seven Hills shine like the Shamantaka jewel with the splendour of millions of Suns enlightening self-knowledge. This divine knowledge is attracting people from all over the world

and this shrine flourishes as a divine place by fulfilling their wishes. 'Tiru' means auspicious, endowing wealth and well-being. Sri means Goddess Lakshmi giving not only wealth, but also wisdom, prosperity and auspiciousness. Though Tirumala is a Tamil word, it has been known as Venkatachalam in Sanskrit since yore.

'Vem' means sins; 'kata' means that which removes. Venkatachalam exemplifies this magnificent well-known meaning. Tirumala implies that it is the abode of the Lord of Venkatachalam. Tirumala is a Vaishnava shrine. Sri Govindaraja Swami temple and Sri Kodandarama temple are prominent in Tirupati. Sri Padmavati temple is in Tiruchanuru near Tirupati. It is said that there are 108 such auspicious Tirupati shrines in our country. But Tirumala Tirupati is the most prominent Vaishnava shrine in our country. That is why, many pilgrims from all corners of our country visit Tirumala Tirupati and Lord Sri Venkateshwara and feel blessed.

Many devotees visit and serve Sri Venkatachalapati, the resident of Ananda Nilaya on the Seven Hills, and feel fulfilled by the grace of the Lord.

We come to know about the construction of the temple in Venkatachalam, etc. from the stone inscriptions carved out in it. There are many over the years who became devotees of Venkatachalapati and undertook the construction of the temple,

arranged the conduct of daily services, ceremonies (*utsavas*) and provided facilities necessary for the devotees. Among them are Akasha Raju who ruled the kingdom with Narayanapuram as the capital and his brother Tondamanu Chakravarti in the beginning. Later the Vijayanagara kings, their successor at Chandragiri, Vira Venkatapati Rayalu, and then the religious mendicants (Mahants), also helped growth of the temple.

It is widely believed that the most endearing and ardent devotee of the Lord, Hattiram Bhavaji among the Mahants, used to see the Lord directly, converse and play the game of dice with Him. During their reign of Chenna state, the Britishers once left Bhavaji in a small room with heaps of sugarcane imposing the condition that he should eat the whole lot before the day-break, in order to test his devotion. During that night Lord Sri Venkatachalapati, as it were, appeared there in the form of an elephant and ate the whole lot of it, thus making the devotee win the test much to his delight. Realising the miracle of the Lord, those officials seeking the forgiveness of Bhavaji delegated their power of administration of Tirumala Tirupati to the Mahants from that day onwards without any intervention. But in 1933 and later in 1951, the Madras government appointed a trustee board with an Executive Officer as its Head. Observing the steep rise in the income of the temple, it divested the Mahants of their power in 1933. For

better utilisation of funds, it affiliated the temple to the Endowments Department and appointed Commissioners and a Governing Body. From 1951 onwards, it started appointing Executive Officers, constructing cottages for the devotees and providing transport facilities.

After the formation of the Andhra Pradesh Government in 1956, the Endowments Department was strengthened and many facilities have been provided. As the income of the temple started increasing regularly, it attained a lot of development under the able leadership of Executive Officers. That is why, the pilgrimage to Tirumala Tirupati shrine has turned quite comfortable nowadays.

The Late Ranganatha Modali was the Commissioner in the beginning in 1933. Later, Mr. C. Anna Rao and many others were Executive Officers. Under their leadership, with their great devotion and service motto, the temple honours and facilities of the pilgrims improved day by day and as a result not only Indians but also foreigners started flocking to the temple for the divine darshan of the Lord. Thousands of devotees are visiting the Lord.

Patri Venkata Ramakrishna Prasad, IAS was the Executive Officer of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams from 30-11-1978 to 9-7-1982. There was an all-round development during his authority, as illustrated in the following Telugu poems:

Sisam

Sri Venkateshuni seva jerinadadi
 Bhaktiprapattulu prabalucunda
Nityakainkaryamul nityotsavamulatlu
 Palu vidhambulshobha prabaluchunda
antakantakumincu natyanta bhaktito
 bhaktajanulayatra prabaluchunda
Velu, lakshalu, kotlu alaya adaya
 Phalitammu leteta prabalucunda

Gitam

devadarshanapaddhati dinamu sulabha
muga labhincucunda prajalu mudamujenda
valayu soukaryamula nenno kaluga jese,
Prathamabhaktudu Sri prasad prathitu dipudu.

Gitam

poorvajanma phalamademo? Mudamu toda
Venkateshudu tanaseva velaya nitlu
Tane niyamincukone nemo! dhanuyudayye
Patrikula vardhi kuvalayabandhavundu.

Gitam

endaro karyakartalu intavaraku
nirvahinciri karyamul nerputoda
kani atyanta mabhivruddhi kalugaledu
innividhamula nabhivruddhi sannutimpa
galige mana prasad palana kalamandu.

Gitam

Divya Tirumala Tirupati Tirthamaina
bhoomi yaninaru poorvulu munulu budhulu

atti nudu lipu dita nijamaye nanucu
trpti jendiri yatrikul trushna dira.

It is a bare fact that the pilgrims, having seen the daily festive splendour of the Lord's ceremonies, put up with whatever trouble they face, wait for any duration of time in the queue, walk in the serial order and go into raptures with the divine darshan of the Lord.

The pilgrims are experiencing directly the saying of the elders that Tirumala is Vaikuntha itself. After a lot of expenditure and facing many troubles, pilgrims visit Tirumala from far-off places for the darshan of the Lord even if it be for just a second. As the Executive Officer, his associates and the temple staff discharge their duties with seamless affection, Tirumala pilgrimage is taking place quite comfortably. Every day everyone right from the young to the old visit Tirumala Tirupati divine shrine and attain the grace of Venkatachalapati. They feel ecstasy beyond expression and feel that their lives are fulfilled by the darshan, capable of endowing comfort to the life both here and after.

Sri Kumaraswami Reddy, IAS took over the charge of Executive Officer from Mr. Prasad on 9 July 1982.

Though Sri Kumaraswami Reddy belongs to Anantapur district, Tirumala shrine is not new to him as he is the son-in-law of Sri Varanasi Raghunatha Reddy who was well-known as the President of

District Board. He knows how his father-in-law as President of TTD Governing Board during 1942-47 encouraged many of the developmental activities taken up by Mr. C. Anna Rao. That is why, there is nothing unusual in believing that he would provide all sorts of facilities required by the devotees as the Executive Officer. The present position is in tune with his aptitude. Besides, it is not exaggeration to say that he got it as the heir of Sri Prasad due to the instigation of Sri Venkatachalapati. Everything is due to the grace of Srinivasa.

Sisam

Adhikaripadavini andina dadiga
 munupati yabhiv[ddhi panulagaanci,
 tanapali karyamul tadavukonaka buddhi
 chaaturyapaddhatin satvaramuga
 bhaktaalimudamondudu panu lenno talapetti
 saaginchuchunnatti sarasu douda
 Prathama bhaktun douda paalanadharmambu
 Paddhatu lerigina prathitu daguta

Gitam

Enci niyamincukonnaavu manci varuni,
 ojalala kumaraswami teju reddy
 dagina pratinidhi niyaminchu taruna mandu
 balira Sri Venkateshwara! Bhakti golutu.

Soon after taking over the charge, Sri Kumaraswami Reddy resolved to take up *uyyalabata* to Saptagiri and get the divine diamond crown ready for the Lord with the approval of the members of the Board and

very soon his work was in progress. May his term of office be worthy of the devotees!

After him Sri S. Lakshminarayana, IAS, took over charge as Executive Officer on 25 November 1983 and expedited the unfinished activities taken up by Sri Kumaraswami Reddy. Prominent among them is the diamond crown of Lord Srinivasa. With great devotion and commitment to Lord Srinivasa, he got the diamond crown made by expert goldsmiths and conducted the ceremony of crowning of the Lord on 20th December 1985.

Finding the flagstaff (*dwajastambha*) dilapidated, Sri PVRK Prasad committed himself to the task of replacing it with a new sandalwood log. He procured a suitable wooden log from Karnataka state government and got it re-erected by Agama Shastra experts and sculptors as per the ordained procedure.

He has provided many facilities for the pilgrims. Efforts were going on since the period of Sri Anna Rao to lay down the ropeway (*uyyala bata*) up the hill. Sri Kumaraswami Reddy also obtained the approval of the Board for construction of the ropeway and making of the diamond crown for the Lord. But the ropeway proposal was shelved for other reasons. Sri Reddy went abroad for prime quality precious diamonds for the crown and commenced the work. He was responsible for introducing free meals for the pilgrims on behalf of

the temple with the help of generous devotees. At present, this programme is going on quite successfully and satisfactorily. I hope that this free meal facility will go on forever for the pilgrims with the help of devotees of Lord Srinivasa. Introduction of this great task worth-remembering forever goes to the credit of Sri Reddy. His successor Sri Lakshminarayana adorned the diamond crown to the Lord on 20 December 1985 in an auspicious *lagnam* as per the Vedic rituals with the consent of elders. He took the measures necessary for easy darshan of the Lord, like allotting separate time-slots for dharma darshanam, those who paid Rs. 25/- and V.I.P.s. As a result, it was not necessary for the devotees to wait for a long time in the queue.

The activities taken up by the above three officers would be of great help to the future generations. It is a fact that it would also help the future researchers.

Let us hope that the future Executive Officers will endeavor a lot to serve the ever-increasing number of pilgrims and Lord Srinivasa as well to the applause of the people. Let the subsequent officers be inspired by the services of the above officers and play their part to become worthy of the grace of Sri Venkatachalapati.

3. Locale of the Shrine-Facilities

Tirumala shrine is in Chittoor district on the southern border of Andhra Pradesh. Tirumala, Tirupati and Sri Kalahasti are the well-known Puranic

pilgrim centres in Andhra Pradesh. They are well-described by our ancestors in their *kavyas*. Tarigonda (Tarikunda) Vengamamba wrote *Venkatachala Mahatmyam* in Telugu. The sacredness of Suvarnamukhi river had been in the limelight even before *Venkatachala Mahatmyam* was written. Great poet Dhoorjati shaped *Sri Kalahasti Mahatmyam* in Telugu as a great poem.

Many travel facilities are available for a visit to Tirumala Tirupati. We can reach Tirupati by train through the main railway lines from Bejawada, Guduru, Renigunta junctions, or Dharmavaram, Pakala junctions or from Madras, Arakonam, Renigunta junctions. TTD buses are available direct to Tirumala from Guduru, Renigunta and Pakala junctions. Adequate facilities for the pilgrims are provided by the temple authorities also. There are also air travel facilities from Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Madras. We can find many pilgrims coming from Bihar, West Bengal, Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala states.

There are huge cottages with all facilities available for the pilgrims on both the sides of Tirupati railway station. The TTD officials help the pilgrims suitably. There are buses from these cottages to Tirumala. There are different kinds of facilities for the pilgrims on the Tirumala hills also. There are free cottages, for hire for those who want to stay

for a few days, with good facilities. Inns are also available for the pilgrims to meet their needs. Tirumala itself is Vaikuntha. The main palace in its corner is Ananda Nilayam. The pilgrims eagerly await to have a glimpse of Vimana Venkateshwara Swami located in the north-west corner of Ananda Nilaya divya vimanam located near the idol of Hanuman. Words fail to describe their devotion and sense of surrender. Even an atheist witnessing the group of devotees stands unmoved for a while, pays obeisance to Vimana Venkateshwara Swami with folded hands and turns a theist. He pays visit to the principal deity, accepts the holy tirtha and prasada with a devout heart and feels sanctified. He prostrates before the flagstaff, looks up at its higher portion as tears of bliss roll down his cheeks, offers salutations and goes back peacefully. This reveals the glory of the shrine.

Direct buses are available to Tirumala from different junctions like Guduru, Renigunta and Pakala every hour. That is why, pilgrims from all over the country—from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, West Bengal to Maharashtra, Gujarat, visit Tirumala Tirupati and feel blessed by the darshan of the Lord.

There are many cottages to shelter the Tirumala pilgrims. There are also adequate facilities for the pilgrims to offer tonsure. As per the ancient tradition, the pilgrims after offering the tonsure take a holy dip in the Swami Pushkarini or bathe in the rooms

with hot water (paid) facility, circumambulate the temple compound, pay a visit to Varaha Swami and then go for the darshan of the Lord (Srivaru) following a traditional serial order (It will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming pages). After the darshan of the Lord, they stay back for a day or two to visit Gogarbha, Akasha Ganga, Papanashanam and other sacred water bodies, get absolved of their sins and feel blessed with great contentment. This is the common experience of the pilgrims for generations together.

India is a spiritual country. It is the abode of a number of incarnations of God. It is the birth-place of the great saints who have classified and written Vedas, Vedangas, different shastras and mythological epics. This is the home for ascetics, hermits and seers with superhuman faculties. It is the birth place of great poets and dramatists who wrote many poems and dramas. It is the finest abode of Aryan civilisation and of purifying samskara. This holy motherland of India is the mother of Adi Shankara, Srimad Ramanuja and Madhwacharya who initiated the people into the science of eternal truth (tattva shastra) in tune with the mindset of the people of the times, moulded them as followers of righteous way of living with a divine bent of mind and broad-minded well-wishers of the entire humanity endowed with a sense of fraternity. This country is the abode of undaunted Hindu dharma of unfathomable depth and profundity like the Pacific Ocean.

Our country is the prop of Bhagavad Gita that emerged due to the history of Kuru-Pandava war unfolded in eighteen chapters. It is known for its religious tolerance and the ordained duties of the humanity. It being translated into multiple languages of our country and winning public acclaim itself is a testimony to the invaluable worth of our spiritual knowledge. Such a country as ours that lights up wisdom has a number of divine shrines and holy water bodies. All these proclaim the immeasurable heights of our Hindu dharma for thousands of years in all four ages (yugas). Though history has taken different turns as per the *yuga dharma*, the eternal truth of Hindu philosophy has always preached the welfare of the entire humanity like the undiminishing sweetness of sugarcane. That is why, the people from all over the world flock to Tirumala Tirupati shrine with a great deal of enthusiasm.

The devotees who witness the Tirumala Shrine and the holy tirthas, stay in the cottages at Tirupati and visit Sri Govindaraja Swami, Sri Kodanda Rama Swami, Tiruchanuru Sri Padmavati Ammavaru, Mangapuram Sri Kalyana Venkateshwara Swami, Nagulapuram Sri Vedanarayana Swami and Sri Kalyana Venkateshwara Swami who married Padmavati Devi first at Narayanavanam (puram). The specialities of different places are a feast for their eyes, filling their minds with ecstasy.

Whatever man may experience—pain or pleasure, poverty or fortune, whatever he may earn—

the wealth of crops, children and grandchildren, what is superior to them is the wealth of spiritual knowledge alone. It is the only thing worth following for a safe transport to the other world. Visit to the shrines and sacred tirthas, association with virtuous men, spiritual thinking, steady and peaceful mental life are the means to attain such spiritual knowledge.

Sri Venkatachalapati, the Lord of Tirumala Tirupati shrine, plays a significant role in granting us wealth of means of such knowledge. To alleviate the distress of the people in the Kali Yuga and redeem them, Vishnu left his Vaikuntha for Venkatachalam (Kreedadri) and settled down under the divya vimana of Ananda Nilayam. That is why, Tirumala shrine has become the Vaikuntha on the earth as exemplified in the following Shloka.

**Krutetu narasimho bhoottretayam raghunandanah,
dwapare vasudevoshca kalou Venkatanayakah!!**

Though Venkatachala Mahatmyam is well-known in the age-old mythological tales, the truth is that the Lord has been still gracious to his devotees and pleasing them.

The elders say that the cow of dharma walks on one foot in Kali Yuga because of the upsurge of sins. In this sin-infested Kali Yuga, we cannot trace morality, dharma, truth, kindness, and magnanimity. The qualities hostile to them are on the rise. Caught in the grip of lust, passion and other bad qualities, the people feel suffocated. In order to save them

from the torture of Kali, the Lord of Vaikuntha, the saviour of devotees, decided to create the cause and effect. So, lost in deep thoughts of *yoga nidra*, he was in privacy in the inner chamber of Vaikuntha along with Lakshmi Devi swinging on the Serpent-bed. At that time, Sage Bhrigu resolved to find out who among the triumvirate of Gods is the liberator and is enriched with *sattva guna*. This serves as the preamble of Venkatachala Mahatmyam.

4. Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam (Story)

**krute vrushadrim vakshanti tretaya manjanacalam,
dwapare Sheshashailam tu kalou Sri enkatachalam,
namani yugabhedena Shailasyasya bhavanti hi.**

The sacred story of Sri Venkatachalam is explained in *Varaha*, *Bhavishyottara* and other *Puranas*. It is no exaggeration to say that all these *Puranas* are written only to make man's life more comfortable. They rescue man from the illusions of Kali era. They hold crystal-clear mirror to the refinement required to establish India's reputation as a holy country that was ruled righteously right from the Manuvus. Sage Soota was well-versed in many *Puranas*. He had the great distinction as a teacher who could instruct the purport of different spiritual sciences like *Vedas* and *Vedangas*. On the pretext of telling the mythological tales to great sages like Shaunaka for the welfare of humanity, he awakened wisdom in us. Isn't the entire world the family for great men? Their goal is to protect this

family. To realise this goal, they wrote many Puranas, spiritual sciences and poetry.

The period of 43, 20, 000 years of Kruta, Treta, Dwapara, Kali Yugas is regarded as a Maha Yuga. The Kreedadri brought down to the earth from Vaikuntha by Garuda is known variously as Vrushabhadri, Anjanadri, Sheshadri, Venkatadri and Garudadri.

In the Kruta yuga, Vrushabhadri itself was known as Vrushabhachalam.

The Story of Vrushabhadri

The architect of creation who relishes the acts of his leela adorned the Kreedadri, the son of Maha Meruvu, with all sorts of mountains, flowers, fruits, creepers, bushes, trees, waterfalls and lakes. This mountain has become the abode of multifarious animals and birds of different kinds. The cries of different animals, sonorous music of birds, the dance of peacocks are all quite delightful. The beauty of Kreedadri is enhanced by different seasonal flowers and fruits. Pleased by the cool breezes, Sri Maha Vishnu strolls here along with Lakshmi Devi enjoying a pleasant conversation with her. As they happened to be a happy couple, the mountain has got the name Anandadri quite justifiably.

Wishing the welfare of the entire world, the Supreme Deity wanted to manifest on the earth in order to protect his devotees. So, he ordered Garuda to get the Vaikuntha Kreedadri and place it in India

to the west of the east coast of the ocean and the north of Suvarnamukhi river. The servant obeyed the order of the master and executed it in a moment.

In the Kruta Yuga a giant named Vrushabha used to go to Kreedadri, bathe in the lakes there, and do penance worshipping his favourite deity Narasimha salagrama. But without losing his inherent demonic traits, he used to torture the saints doing penance in the surroundings of the mountain. Unable to endure his torture, the saints undertook penance and appealed to Lord Vishnu about their troubles. Having heard their lamentation, the Lord showed his divine form to Vrushabha in the Narasimha salagrama worshipped by him. The demon was immensely happy to see the divine form of the Lord. He bowed down to him and sang his eulogy in various ways. Pleased with his devotion, the Lord of Vaikuntha got ready to give him a boon. Vrushabha expressed his desire to fight with the Lord. In order to fulfil his desire, Srihari exhibited his greater strength and valour than Vrushabha in the fight. Delighted Vrushabha expressed prayerfully his last desire thus: “Hey Lord! Please cut me asunder with your holy discus and grant me liberation. But shower your grace in such a way that this mountain is known by my name.” Sripati fulfilled his desire. From that day onwards, Anandadri acquired the name of Vrushabhadri as per the legend.

Thus, the Kreedadri of Vaikuntha which appeared as Anandadri on the earth turned Vrushabhadri on account of Vrushabha.

In the Tretayuga, Anjanadevi did penance on the Vrushabhadri for the favour of Vayudeva. She begot invincible Anjaneya as son with the boon granted by him. Since Anjanadevi got her wish fulfilled with her penance on the mountain, it has come to be known as Anjanadri.

There is another legend about how Anandadri got the name of Sheshachalam.

One day Adishesha was appointed to guard at the doorstep as Sri Maha Vishnu was enjoying private moments with his consort Ramadevi in his inner chambers. Then the Wind-God Vayu came there for the darshan of the Lord. As soon as he reached the entrance of the inner chambers, Shesha prevented him from entering the chambers. But Vayudeva proud of his strength did not care for his words saying that he had urgent work with the Lord and that he should not be disturbed. Adishesha revealed Lord Srihari's command and his obligation and stopped him with his dharmadanda. Angry Vayudeva shouted at him, "Have you forgotten how Jaya and Vijaya were cursed earlier for obstructing entry to Sanaka Sanandana. Don't enrage me further!" and stepped ahead. In order to implement the orders of the Lord, Shesha failed Vayu's efforts. But Vayu set him aside and stubbornly continued to head forward. He did not heed to the advice of Shesha despite the fact that it is the duty of the servants to comply with the orders of the Lord. He got ready to exhibit his strength.

Both Vayu and Shesha were fighting with each other with equal strength. Sridevi detected it and informed the Lord about it. Grasping the situation, Vishnu thought it was proper time for teaching a lesson to Vayudeva and suppress his arrogance. So, he asked from inside the palace itself, “O Shesha! What’s the noise there?” As Adi Shesha was narrating the incident, the Lord reached the doorstep slowly and majestically. Seeing the Lord, Vayu prostrated before the Lord and with folded hands began eulogising the Lord. Consoling him, the Lord said, “Why do you argue with Shesha who gloats over his strength?” Listening to the Lord’s words, Shesha swelled with a bit of pride and began boasting that there is none to match him in the seven worlds as far as the wealth of wisdom and renunciation are concerned. The Lord thought that it was the opportune moment to quell the pride of both Vayu and Shesha. He said, “The proof of courage lies in one’s acts! I suggest a way out to prove your strength. On the earth my Kreedadri is regarded as Anandadri, Vrushabhadri and Anjanadri. O Shesha! You coil round my mountain to exhibit your might. Vayu should move the mountain surrounded by you. Then we’ll know who is mightier.” As soon as he heard these words, Shesha went to the earth, expanded his form of three yojanas of width and thirty yojanas of length and coiled round the mountain. Vayu too took the form of destructive gale with great enthusiasm and attempted to move the mountain but

in vain. Brahma and other angels were watching this strange tussle without batting their eyelids, waiting curiously to see the winner in this fight.”

Thus, both of them were struggling with unrelenting verve shouting warwhoops. Brahma was worried that what this tussle would result in and the harm that could befall the world, so he asked Vayu to stop his efforts. But Vayu did not heed to his advice. Then all the angels requested Shesha to withdraw from the fight. Understanding their intentions, Shesha released his hold a bit. Instantly, Vayu lifted the mountain and threw it out. Maha Meruvu begged Vayu for saving his son. Considering his request, Vayu restored the Kreedadri alongwith Shesha to its original location, to the north of Swarnamukhi river. Brahma and other angels could infer that Narayana’s intention to fix Kreedadri to the north of Swarnamukhi river was the cause of the dispute between them. They blessed, “May this Kreedadri, alongwith Shesha, be known as Sheshacalam, keeping with the future mission of Narayana!” In the meanwhile, both Vayu and Shesha relented and became friends with each other leaving their differences keeping in view the welfare of the world. Thus, it may be noticed that Sheshacalam assumed the serpentine form justifying the meaning of its appellation. The mountain range commences thinly at Penchalakona of Rapooru Taluq, Nellore district, takes several twists and raises its head like the hood of a serpent near the dome over the temple gate.

Kaliyuga began at the end of the Lord's incarnation as Sri Krishna in the Dwapara Yuga for relieving the earth of its burden. As the Yuga was infested with evil, the Lord of Vaikuntha manifested himself on Kreedadri as Sri Venkatachalapati, married Padmavati to fulfil her wish as Vedavati in the earlier birth and turned Tirumala into a virtual Vaikuntha on the earth. The devotees feel such words of the author of mythological tales are established truths forever. There is no exaggeration whatsoever.

Since the good old Kreedadri has become Lord Venkateshwara's Ananda Nilaya, it is regarded as Venkatachalam in Kali Yuga. Its Lord is known as Lord Venkateshwara.

Vem+kata+adri means the mountain that subsides sins. The word Vem is amrita bija; Katam (Katamu) means golden; Viewed in this light, it means it is full of ambrosia and wealth. Venkatachalam means Tirupati according to the elders. Our ancient people believed that the mere sight of Venkatachalam perishes all the sins. This belief continues to be there not only among Indians but also among some of the foreigners. That is why, even foreigners visit Venkatachalam. Venkatadri is in the form of a few ranges of mountains. Though it is known as Saptagiri, it has some more meaningful names as per the *Varaha Purana*.

The Tirumala pilgrimage fulfils all the wishes intended. Hence, it is known as Chintamani (Wish-

fulfilling Jewel). As it endows us with the wisdom, it is known as Jnanadri. As there are all the sacred water-bodies, it is known as Tirthadri. As it has virtuous Holy Lake (Swami Pushkarini), it is known as Pushkaradri. Since it is in the golden hue, it is known as Kanakadri. As a devotee by name Narayana did penance in the past and realised Vishnu here, it has acquired the name Narayanadri. As Garuda brought this to the earth from the Vaikuntha, it got the name of Garudadri. As Shweta Varaha Swami lived here, it got the name of Varahadri. As it is the abode of Srinivasa, it is known as Srinivasadri. As Venkateshwara manifested here, it is Venkatadri. It is evident that the devotees regard this Anandadri (Kreedadri) by such various names according to their own individual experience.

Thus, Tirumala has become renowned in the four Yugas. Just as the sweetness of sugar will not leave it even if different preparations are made with it, it is truth by all means that Sri Venkatachalam, with whatever name you may chant it, will remove all sins, sanctify men and enable them to be eligible for the benediction of God. It is true by all means.

There are many chapters in *Varaha Purana*, *Skandha Purana*, and *Bhavishyottara Purana* singing the glory of the sports and miracles of Lord Venkateshwara and his eagerness to protect the devotees. We can find in them the story of Sri Venkatachalam, the sacred water bodies in it, and their miracles. All of them proclaim the distinctness

of the Lord. They suggest that the pilgrimages are the pathways to redemption for men.

It is quite ostensible that Sri Venkatachalapati is easily accessible, like gold tied to the hem of a saree, to those who desire him. Instant is his response to those who call him. He fulfils the desires sought for. As soon as we see the Lord's divinely auspicious form, it gets strongly imprinted on our hearts and we forget ourselves for a moment. Quite a few devotees have been experiencing this ecstasy for long. It is a common knowledge that they will experience it in future as well. That is why, Tirupati is regarded as the heaven on the earth. Foreigners have also realised the glory of the Lord, constructed temples in their land and started worshipping him.

Holy Water-Bodies in Venkatachalam

There are many holy water bodies in Venkatachalam. All those are very sacred and true to the meaning of their names. There is no exaggeration to say that God has created them for human beings to bathe in them and get sanctified. Devotees have constructed Alwar Tirtham and Floral well. Water oozes in them as in the natural perennial rivers. Let me explain some of them.

1. Kapila Tirtham

It is at the footsteps of Sheshacalam mixed with seven sacred water-bodies. It is the age-old tradition that the devotees first bathe in Kapila Tirtham, visit

Kapileshwara and ascend Sheshacalam before the darshan of Venkatachalapati.

In the past a few kings from the northern country were going on a pilgrimage to Venkatachalam. On the way, a Vedic scholar who performs daily Sacrifice named Madhava, suddenly turned lustful and ravished a woman forcibly. He became deranged after her death and joined the pilgrims to reach Tirupati. The next day, all of them finished their daily chores and bathed in Kapila Tirtham and offered oblation to the departed ancestors. Seeing this, Madhava too offered oblation with lumps of clay, though not with lumps of cooked rice like the kings, with great devotion and became sanctified. His departed ancestors also got redeemed and reached the heaven. That is why, it is said that offering of oblation to the deceased in Kapila Tirtham after a holy dip in it will serve double purpose.

That night Madhava had the darshan of Kapileshwara along with the pilgrims and slept in Kapila Tirtham. After a while, he woke up and started ascending Sheshacalam, Shining like the early morning Sun, with the intense desire to have a glimpse of Venkatachalapati all alone. Brahma and other angels met him on the way and said, “Hey Brahmin! You’re absolved of the squalour of your sins with the holy dip in Kapila Tirtham. Now go to Venkatadri and take a holy dip in the Swami Pushkarini near the tamarind tree, the abode of the

Lord, worship Varaha Swami on its banks and take the darshan of the Lord. Your life will be fulfilled. In your next life, you'll be born as the son of Sudharma, a Chola king well-known in the lunar dynasty, and rule the Chola kingdom. You'll beget a daughter then equivalent to Sri Maha Lakshmi. Sri Venkatachalapati will be your son-in-law. With the merit you gain for offering your daughter in marriage to the Lord as a staunch devotee, you'll rule the kingdom for a long period, breathe your last and attain the supreme abode of bliss." Thus, they foretold his future and left.

Madhava meditated upon those angels in his heart, saluted the direction in which they exited, took a holy dip in Swami Pushkarini, had the darshan of Varaha Swami and Sri Venkatachalapati in succession and attained divinity for becoming the father-in-law of Venkateshwara. That is why, it is the past custom for Tirumala pilgrims to bathe in the Kapila Tirtham first to pay off the debt to the deceased, visit Kapileshwara, spend the night there itself, then go up the Venkatachalam, take a holy dip in Swami Pushkarini and have the darshan of the Lord. As the Bus and cottage facilities are available, the pilgrims are now directly going to Tirumala from Tirupati by bus. As the temple authorities are offering adequate facilities and attracting the pilgrims in many ways, it is hoped that Kapila Tirtham will develop according to the taste of the devotees.

As per the legend, in the past, Sage Kapila was doing penance having built a hermitage under Sheshachalam. Then the Shiva Linga he was worshipping in the underworld (Patala) erupted to the surface. While all the angels were returning from the marriage of Venkateshwara and Padmavati to their respective abodes, Parameshwara alongwith Parvati visited Kapila's hermitage, blessed him and manifested as Kapileshwara near Kapila Tirtham. The TTD is conducting float festival for Tirupati Kapileshwara Swami even now every year on a grand scale. The devotees can utilise this opportunity for fulfilment in both the worlds.

There is Shakra Tirtham above the Kapila Tirtham. Devendra, it appears, got absolved of his curse due to bathing in this Tirtham. Up above it is Vishwaksena Tirtham. It appears Vishwaksena, son of Varuna, bathed in this Tirtham, did penance and had the darshan of Lord Vishnu and became the commandant of the Lord's army with his blessings. Thus, there are Pancayudha Tirtham, Agni Tirtham, Brahma Tirtham and Saptarshi Tirtham one above the other. Thus, the Venkatachala Tirthams giving fruitful results unite with Kapila Tirtham. That is why, there is the tradition of devotees visiting this Tirtham for a holy dip and have a night's sleep there. The glory of these Tirthams is known through the following story.

In the past, a devotee well-versed in Vedas, Vedangas and all the spiritual sciences, desired to

visit the holy Tirthams in the entire world and slept meditating steadily upon the Lord. Lord Sri Maha Vishnu with his five weapons including the conch and discus, appeared to him in the fourth quarter (*jhaamu*) of the night and said, “Hey child! I’ve known your intention. You can’t complete the visit to the Tirthams of the world in this life as it takes a long time. Better you bathe in the well-known Tirthams of Venkatachalam and you’re sure to get the result of bathing in all the Tirthams of the three worlds.” Saying this, the Lord disappeared. It is said that the devotee immediately set out for the Venkatachalam pilgrimage, bathed in different holy Tirthams beginning with Kapila Tirtham and acquired a lot of merit. Kapila Tirtham is a mixture of different Tirthams of Venkatachalam.

2. Swami Pushkarini Tirtham

Swami Pushkarini Tirtham is to the north-east of Ananda Nilayam in Tirumala. There is Sri Varaha Swami temple to the north-west of Swami Pushkarini. According to the *Puranas*, Garuda brought Swami Pushkarini along with Kreedadri, when the Lord of Vaikuntha ordered him to get the former.

This Holy Lake has become sacred as the Lord of Vaikuntha played with Sridevi and Bhooodevi for fun in its waters. It is said that the waters of Akasha Ganga have become the undercurrent of the Lake and hence it has become the chief of all Tirthams,

the holiest and the most glorious. *Varaha Purana* mentions that those who meditate upon it and take a holy dip acquire all sorts of miraculous powers (siddhis).

**Swami Pushkarini snanam sadguroh
padasevanam,
Ekadashivratam chapi traya matyanta
durlabham.**

It is difficult for ordinary men to get a holy dip in the Swami Pushkarini, service at the feet of a noble guru and conduct of Ekadashivratam. Nowadays, devotees are bathing in the Swami Pushkarini, having the darshan of the Lord and circumambulating in the path of Vaikuntha dwara on the day of Vaikuntha Ekadashi. The spectacle provides a feast for the eyes.

There are many stories describing the glory of this Pushkarini. Let us know about two stories pertaining to Shankhana and Atmarama.

In the past there was a king of Lunar dynasty named Shankhana. He was ruling the kingdom of Sankashya bequeathed from his father. After some time, his antagonist kings joined hands, conquered his kingdom and drove him away from the kingdom along with his relatives, friends and ministers. Grief-stricken Shankhana went to Rameshwaram in the South along with his retinue and stayed there for some time.

Later, he travelled towards the North, bathed in the Suvarnamukhari river, visited Lord of Sri

Kalahasti and Jnana Prasoonamba and stayed there for some time. He was depressed and worried about his loss of kingdom when Ashariravani spoke to him thus in the early morning one day, “Hey king! It is the duty of men not to lose heart in a disastrous situation. Depression takes us nowhere. Those who don’t lose heart will surely succeed. You’ll get back your kingdom if you pick up courage, go up the nearby Venkatachalam hill, bathe in Swami Pushkarini cleanly and meditate upon Lord Sripati. So, go to the Venkatachalam immediately, visit Swami Pushkarini, take a holy dip in it and get your desires fulfilled.” Hearing these words, the king immediately left on a tour to Venkatachalam along with his companions, reached the Holy Lake filled with the beautiful blooming lotuses, built a hermitage, took a holy bath in Swami Pushkarini and spent six months there taking the darshan of Sri Venkatachalapati.

Later, one fine morning as Shankhana was telling the beads on the banks of the Lake, Sri Maha Vishnu along with Sridevi and Bhoodevi on either side appeared before him with the splendour of midday Sun and said anticipating the devotee’s desire, “O child! As you’ve bathed in the Swami Pushkarini with devotion and commitment, you’re cleansed of all your sins. May you rule your kingdom comfortably! Those who bathe in this Pushkarini daily with devotion and diligence will attain Lordship.” Then, he disappeared.

As Shankhana was returning to his kingdom along with his retinue with the blessings of the Lord, he came to know from his people that all the antagonist kings who banished him from the kingdom fought among themselves and left the kingdom. He felt very happy that he got back his kingdom free of the enemies due to God's grace. He continued to worship the Lord of Vaikuntha and ruled the kingdom treating the people as his own children and later attained the immortal world.

According to the Puranas, the Swami Pushkarini is the Lord of all Tirthams; besides, those who serve it with devotion and diligence will also attain Lordship, and hence, the nomenclature of Swami Pushkarini is well-justified.

There was a virtuous devotee of Lord Vishnu by name Atmarama who used to contemplate on Lord Srinivasa wholeheartedly every day. After some time, his entire inherited property melted away like camphor. It was difficult for him even to feed his family. Though he helped many, there was none who would invite and support him. Atmarama felt that fate was inexorable and set out for the pilgrimage of Venkatachalam. First, he visited Kapila Tirtham, took a holy dip in it and had the darshan of Kapileshwara. Going up Tirumala, he bathed in the different holy water bodies on the way and reached Swami Pushkarini. A glimpse of the Lake itself was enough to dry up all his past sins. He realised with his own experience that everyone had to bear the

consequences of karma whoever he may be and that the sayings of the elders were always true. Thinking that the knowledge had dawned on him due to the visit to Pushkarini, he praised the Lord in different ways. He started living by the side of Pushkarini bathing in it thrice a day and feeding himself with tubers and fruits available.

One day while searching for the tubers and fruits, Atmarama came across a sage by name Sanatkumara deep in penance in a nearby cave, approached him humbly and stood by him with folded hands and bowed head. After some time, he said, “Hey Sage! Your divine splendour has driven away the darkness of all my past sins. I’ve seen the light. I seek your refuge. Please treat me as your disciple and grant me initiation.”

The sage learnt his past life with his closed eyelids, and said, “Narayana alone can drive away all sins of the past birth. You were engaged in lustful pleasures forgetting Narayana in your past life. You can’t avoid the consequences of your sins. Sin attracts when the wealth is thought to be for pleasures and not for charity. Now the wisdom has dawned on you. Forget your past and think of your future. If you bathe in Swami Pushkarini and continue to praise Sri Maha Lakshmi, you’ll be happy and reach the highest abode of the Lord.” Saying this, he disappeared. Atmarama was over-awed by it. He recollected the sage’s instruction and started bathing in Pushkarini with greater diligence and devotion and

doing penance on its banks. One day, the Lord of Vaikuntha appeared before him with his five divine weapons, adornments and fragrant garlands along with his consorts, Sridevi and Bhoodevi, and said, “Hey devotee! With the holy dip in the Pushkarini, all your sins are atoned for. Wisdom has dawned on you due to the sight of noble men. You’ve pleased Lakshmi Devi with your fixed devotion. Hence, you will enjoy great wealth, health and longevity” and disappeared. There was no end to Atmarama’s joy. Tears of joy filled his eyes. His throat became choked. He saw the sky a number of times and thinking of the Lord bowed down to him. Thinking “Whatever be the virtues accrued in this life, one cannot escape the gathered sins of the past life,” he left for his abode.

Though Atmarama enjoyed the inherited wealth due to his past merit, welcomed the guests and acquired the knowledge of spiritual sciences, he had to experience troubles due to the karma of past life. But, due to the pilgrimage to the holy shrines and water bodies, visit to the noble people and taking the necessary instruction, he obtained the grace of Narayana and was endowed with all sorts of treasure and finally got blessed.

The life-story of Atmarama testifies to the Vedic dictum, “*Esha ssarvabhootantaratma apahatapapma divyo deva eko Narayana*”. Those who desire moksha (redemption) setting aside

dharma, artha and kama among the *caturvidha purusharthas* will desire and chant Narayana. Narayana himself is the Lord of Vaikuntha abode and Sri Venkateshwara resides in Tirumala shrine. Srinivasa alone is the means to liberation. There is no way out for well-being other than the path of Bhakti. “Even if Bhakti yoga of a devotee for Srinivasa is hindered, his soul will reach the abode of Vishnu. Darshan of shrines and sacred water bodies are the means to liberation.”

3. Akasha Ganga Tirtham

To the north of Swami Pushkarini, there are high hilly rocks full of huge trees, creepers and bushes and fruit-bearing trees of different types. Wild animals, it is said, used to wander there freely in that thick forest in the ancient days. There, water from a mountain tunnel flows down continuously. This water fall is Akasha Ganga. This stream of water commences its journey within a mountain and descends to the earth. It is said that the heavenly Ganga waters get mixed in this. It is also a very holy water-body.

In the past there used to live a householder on the banks of Goutami river. He led a life approved by good and virtuous men. He was a scholar who knew the ordained duties of all the spiritual sciences and Puranas. He was of a noble class, virtuous, endowed with devotion and reverence for the parents, preceptors and gods. Enjoying the inherited

property, he extended hospitality to the guests. He acquired fame as an excellent man. One day there came a guest to his house. As it was the day of conducting Shraddha ceremony to the departed, the householder welcomed the guest to be a part of it. The obsequies were conducted with great devotion and diligence. The guest was seen off with betel leaves and honorarium for the religious service quite satisfactorily. After some time, the virtuous man's face began changing gradually into that of a donkey. Worried about it, the man began searching for a way out. Bathing in Krishna and Penna rivers and visiting temples here and there, he reached Agastya's hermitage. (Now this hermitage is well-known as an Ishwara temple consecrated by Agastya on the banks of Suvarnamukhi river to the north of Tondawada village near Chandragiri on the way from Tirupati to Chittoor). He saw brilliant Sage Agastya sitting amidst great sages there, saluted him, stood before him with folded hands with great humility and obedience, informed him about the whole episode of his and requested him to free him from his ugly face. The sage then went into deep meditation and realised the story behind with the power of his penance and informed that the lapse was due to his appointing a childless brahmin for the religious obsequies. He thought for a while and said, "Hey child! You know all the spiritual sciences and Puranas. You've all the good virtues. You ought to have practical knowledge along with the knowledge of

Shaastras. It is good to know from the elders the matters which you do not know. The holy water bodies are greatly glorious. There is Venkatachalam at a distance of three *koss* to the north-east of this place. There is a holy Tirtham named Swami Pushkarini in it. If you ascend the Venkatachalam hill, approach Swami Pushkarini, bathe in it with devotion and diligence, you'll be free of your lapse. If you take the darshan of Varaha Swami on the banks of Pushkarini, bathe in the holy waters of Akasha Ganga to the north of it, you'll get your original form. So, go to Venkatachalam quickly." With the blessings of the sage, the brahmin ascended Venkatachalam, bathed in Swami Pushkarini, had the darshan of Varaha Swami, took a holy dip in Akasha Ganga, got rid of his sin and got back his original face. It is said that he stayed there for some time praising the glory of the Tirtham.

In the past, Anjana Devi married an excellent monkey by name Kesari, but remained barren for a long time. Worried about it she visited Sage Matanga and prayed to him to initiate her into a mantra to beget children. Pleased with her devotion, Matanga told her, "Hey Mother! the Kreedadri of Vaikuntham is on the earth to the north of Swarnamukhi river. There is Swami Pushkarini in it. If you bathe in it, all your sins will perish. There is Varaha Swami on the banks of Pushkarini. With his darshan, your desires will be fulfilled. To the north of Pushkarini, there is a divine forest on the hill. From the peak of the hill

flows down Akasha Ganga. A dip in it not only sanctifies you but also endows you with longevity and health. Undertake penance with steady mind on the banks of Akasha Ganga for Vayudeva. With his blessings you'll beget a very valorous and strong son." He sent her away by initiating her into the mantra for Vayudeva's favour. According to the sage's instruction, Anjana Devi went to Kreedadri of the earth and had a bath in the Pushkarini, darshan of Varaha Swami, bath in the Akasha Ganga and undertook penance with great devotion for Vayudeva. After some time, satiated with her penance, Vayudeva gave her the desired boon and left. Because of the boon, Anjana Devi begot a very strong son by name Anjaneya. The Kreedadri on which she did penance has been called Anjanadri since Tretayuga, according to the Purana. As per the history of Anjana Devi, it is evident that the holy waters of Akasha Ganga destroy all kinds of sins and endow us with longevity, health and wealth. Besides, if the childless women perform a *vrata* at this Tirtham, they beget children. It is said that if one takes a holy dip in Akasha Ganga every year on the Full Moon Day in the month of Chaitra when the ruling star is Chitta and perform *vrata* for their family's favourable deity, one will beget children.

4. Papanashana Tirtham

Papanashana Tirtham has a significant name. The blots of sins of those who bathe in it can be seen floating on the surface of waters. This is in one

of the important Tirthams on a mountain in the valleys of Tirumala to the north of Swami Pushkarini. There is bus facility of TTD to reach Papanashanam from Tirumala. Pilgrims bathe in it and get rid of their sins. A part of the hill adjoining the western mountain projects ahead in the form of a square. From this part flows down water in streams. The Temple authorities have provided facilities there too for the pilgrims. The beauty of the landscape is beyond description. One should see it and enjoy.

There are huge trees giving cool shade in the midday sun. A glimpse of the Tirtham is enough for the devotees to think of the divine glory of God's creation and meditate upon God with steadiness. It cannot be explained; it can only be experienced. There is a Puranic story that reveals the glory of this Tirtham. In the old days, there lived a person named Bhadramati, well-versed in Vedas and Vedangas. He was humble though a great scholar. As he had the blessings of Saraswati, he had no grace of Lakshmi. He had no profession and remained penniless. Observing his good looks, youth and high education, six women named—Kruta, Sindhu, Yashovati, Kamini, Malini and Shobha married him. Bhadravati among them had a number of children. The proverb that a poor fellow will have many children is proved true in his case. He was eking out his livelihood somehow. Gradually, feeding his family has become a problem. Since the rich do not welcome the poor, the proverb that “the entire world is rooted in wealth”

has come into vogue. Though a person is devoid of education and discretion, he will be respected if he is wealthy by dint of his past merit. Very few educated people are wealthy because of merit accrued in the past. But there are many who suffer from daily poverty. They do not aspire for other's wealth. Only a few kings, who know the depth of their education, patronise the educated. There are a few who desire respect from the kings. But Bhadramati has no such aspirations. He is content with the gruel he earned on his own. He was neither able to feed his wife and children, beg others for help, nor lose his self-respect. He was eking out his life somehow enduring all the suffering.

The burden of the family was increasing day by day. He was losing his strength gradually. Seeing all this, Bhadramati was grief-stricken one day. Then, understanding the cause of husband's worry, his wife Kamini tried to console him saying thus: "Hey dear husband! I heard a sage tell my father during my childhood that there is a holy water-fall named Papanashanam in Venkatachalam and those who bathe in it will get rid of their sins and become eligible for the grace of Goddess Lakshmi and those who bathe and donate land will gain all kinds of wealth and enjoy all sorts of pleasures! Thus, he explained the glory of the holy water-fall. So, it's better you go on a pilgrimage to that place to earn the grace of Goddess Lakshmi. I think this is the only solution to your problem." Immediately, Bhadramati set out

for Venkatachalam along with the family. On the way, he reached a town Sushali. He learnt from the people that there was a wealthy and munificent person named Sughosha, charitable to the poor, living in that town. Seeking his refuge, he went to him, informed him about his predicament, and asked for some gift of land. The latter thought that it would be befitting to extend charity to a scholar of Vedas and Puranas who has many children and suffering from poverty. So, he extended his hospitality to him and also donated some land. Bhadra was quite happy to get the land in charity and left for Venkatachalam.

He bathed in Swami Pushkarini at Venkatachalam, had the darshan of Varaha Swami and went to Papanashanam along with his family. He bathed in the Papanashanam, meditated upon Lakshmi Narayana and donated the land he had got in charity from Sughosha to an educated, noble, poor man who has children, as a service for the divine pleasure. Then Lakshmi Narayana appeared before him in his divine form. Sanctified by the Lord's presence, Bhadramati eulogised him in a number of ways and stood with folded hands as tears of bliss rolled down his cheeks. Grasping his intentions, the Lord blessed him with all sorts of wealth and disappeared. Having the grace of the Lord, Bhadramati travelled back for a few days to his native place, enjoyed all sorts of pleasures and fortune and attained liberation at the end. It is said that Sumati and Drudhamati also got rid of their sins with the

holy dip in Papanashanam and attained pleasures both in this and other worlds.

According to the Puranas, those who bathe in Papanashanam on an auspicious Sunday, the seventh waxing gibbous phase of Moon adjoining the Pushyami and Hasta stars, will be free of their sins and court good fortune.

5. Kumaradhara Tirtham

It is in the north-west corner of Papanashanam. It is also sacred with justifiable nomenclature. It is said that even if centenarians bathe in it, they will be transformed into young men with vigorous body. According to the Purana, those who bathe and get cleaned in the afternoon of Full Moon Day adjoining the star of Magha in the month of Maagha and feed the poor as charity along with gift of money will attain the merit of bathing in all the holy Tirthams.

The following story illustrates this.

In the old days, there was an old man by name Koundinya who was well-versed in all the Shaastras. He was a gentleman and devotee of God. He stayed along with his disciple in a cottage at Venkatachalam performing rites of sacrifice and doing penance. One day he went to the forest to collect flowers, fruits and wood for the daily worship. After gathering them while he was on the way back, he lost his way. As it was getting late, he was crying hoarse calling his disciple, "O Koundinya! Koundinya!". At that time, Venkatachalapati in the guise of a young man

approached the old man and asked him, “Hey man! This isn’t the place for men to move. There’s none here. Who’s Koundinya? Where’s he?” The old man was surprised and after calming down, replied, “Hey Sir! Koundinya is my disciple! He is in the nearby cottage of mine. I’ve lost my way and am wandering here. Isn’t there anyone here? My vision is blurring. I can’t see anything if it gets dark. I don’t know how to go back to my cottage. I am worried as to how I can perform my daily rites of worship. I’m old and weak. I can’t walk far. There’s none here who belongs to me. Hey Lord Venkateshwara! I’ve trusted you. The Sun is sinking in the west. Who’s my refuge?” While he was thus crying, Sri Venkatachalapati said to him, “Hey man! You’re more than a hundred years old. You’re emaciated without energy. Your eye sight is on the wane. You’re not in a position to walk. Why should you come to this forest where wild beasts loiter? Do you want to live further?” He laughed at him.

Then the old man said, “Hey Sir! I don’t know who you’re. I don’t have any hope of life. My mind doesn’t agree to leave my body without fulfilling my debt to the gods till my last breath, for salvation. My worry is about how I can stay without performing the daily rites of worship but not about my life!”. Understanding his disposition, Venkatachalapati said, “Hey sir! Hold my hand and come along with me. I’ll get you to the retreat safely.” With the support of his hand, he took him along for some distance

and pointed out a Tirtham and said, “Bathe in this Tirtham. Let’s go to the hermitage!” Accordingly, the old man had a dip in the Tirtham and by the time he got up he was transformed into a sixteen-year-old young man with bright eyes and was surprised at his tender age. The young man who took him there was not to be seen. The angels from the heaven too were surprised at Venkatachalapati’s passion for the devotee and rained flowers on the Lord. They eulogised the Lord in different ways. Later they blessed him with all sorts of treasure required to pay off the debt to the gods and disappeared. As the old man turned a young man, the Tirtham got the name Kumaradhara Tirtham signifying its meaning. He went to his hermitage, performed his daily rites of worship and acts to please the gods and reached the divine world.

The elders say that the old men, who bathe in Kumaradhara Tirtham thrice daily on the Full Moon Day adjoining Magha star for a period of three months and worship Sri Venkatachalapati as per their ability and meditate upon him, will certainly get back their strong, youthful bodies, enjoy the pleasures of this world and attain the Vaikuntha at the end. Such well-known Tirthams are in Venkatachalam. That is why, Venkatachalam has become a divine shrine.

6. Deva Tirtham

This Deva Tirtham is in the cave of the hill to the north-west of Temple’s Vimana. If men bathe with clean bodies in this Tirtham on Thursday

conjoined with Pushyami star or on Monday conjoined with Shravana star or vyatipata yoga (the seventeenth of the astrological yogas), they'll get rid of all the sins. They will be endowed with longevity, health and fortune of having sons and grandchildren and enjoy the pleasures of this world and of the other. It is mentioned in the Purana.

7. Pandava Tirtham

This Tirtham is nearly two kilometres away from Swami Pushkarini. In Dwapara Yuga Lord Sri Krishna sent the Pandavas to stay in Sheshadri for some time in order to atone for the Sin of killing their cousins, Kauravas. With the permission of Sri Krishna, the Pandavas went to Sheshadri on Sunday, the twelfth day of Vaishakha and lived in a cottage on the bank of a lake. Hence, it is said that this water body got the name of Pandava Tirtham.

8. Tumburu Tirtham

In the past, a Gandharva by name Tumburu went to Venkatachalam and started penance in a cottage built on the banks of a water-body to the north of Papanashanam. After a certain period, devotee-lover Sri Venkatachalapati manifested before him and fulfilled his desire. Thus, Tumburu, it is said, attained the eternal abode of Vaikuntha due to the good fortune of realising Sri Venkateshwara.

As per the Purana, those who bathe in this Tumburu Tirtham on the Full Moon Day conjoined with Uttara Phalguni star in the month of Phalguna

and worship Venkateshwara, will be free of the cycle of rebirth.

9. Ghona Tirtham

This Tirtham is near Tumburu Tirtham. It rids the human beings on the earth of all the sins and sanctifies them. In the past Agastya went to Venkatachalam along with all his disciples and camped in Ghona Tirtham and informed them of the glory of this Tirtham as follows.

There are many sinners like those who cut the green plants (it is a grave sin to cut the green trees), who sell girls, who misappropriate the properties of temples, who breach the full tank bunds with a sinful attitude, who rape other women, who reject their husbands, commit perjury, who give false evidence, who are drunkards, who hate brahmins, who betray the preceptor, who indulge in self-flattery, who betray the trust, etc. Even such sinners if they bathe in the Ghona Tirtham in the month of Maagha before the Sun-rise and worship the rising Sun, all their sins will vanish. Further, if they stay on the bank of this Tirtham and worship Srimannarayana for a month following the rigours of a vow, all their sins will vanish and accrue great merit.

In the hollow of a tree near it, there lived the wife of Tumburu in the form of a frog due to the curse of her husband for a long time. The frog heard about the influence of Ghona Tirtham while Agastya was narrating it to his disciples and got freed from

the curse of her husband and regained her original form. To the surprised sage, she submitted, “Hey Great Sage! As I quarrelled with my husband and rejected him, my husband cursed me to be a frog. As such I’ve been living in this hollow of the peepul tree. As I heard you tell the glory of Ghona Tirtham to your disciples, I’m rid of my curse. I’ll not disobey my husband’s commands and prove my chastity. I request you to bless me and permit me to go.” Thus saying, it prostrated before the sage and took his blessings. Agastya felt happy about her remorse and taught her the duties of a chaste and virtuous wife thus.

**Patiratma patirvishnuh patirbrahma patishshivah,
patirguruh patistirtha miti sthnam vidu rbudhah**

Thus, he instructed what is good to her. The wife of Gandharva then thanked the sage, took his blessings. As per the orders of her husband, she adopted the vow of holy dip in the month of Magha, worshipped Srimannarayana, and regained her husband’s affection and retained her chastity and virtue as a wife, as per the epics.

10. Sanaka Sanandana Tirtham

There are many holy and glorious Tirthams in Venkatachalam. Sanaka Sanandana Tirtham is at a distance of five or six kilometres towards the north of Papanashanam. According to the elders, if we take a holy dip in the Sanaka Sanandana Tirtham in the early hours of the twelfth day of Margashirsha

month, get initiation into Sri Venkatesha ashtakshari mantra and chant it for a month with attention from the thirteenth day of waxing Moon, all our desires will be fulfilled.

11. Kaya Rasayana Tirtham

Near the Sanaka Sanandana Tirtham is the Kaya Rasayana Tirtham. According to the Purana, if one bathes in this Tirtham and continues to drink its water, after some time one gets rid of all kinds of diseases, and gets rejuvenated (Kayakalpa siddhi) with a strong, well-proportioned body and without old age.

12. Necessity of Shrines and Tirthams

There are many glorious divine Tirthams in Venkatachalam. It is known not only for the Tirthams but also for the various herbal roots of medicinal value. The sages of the past have referred to them in the Puranas. We realise their greatness only when we drink the holy water with diligence, devotion, spiritual bent of mind and forbearance, and not for pleasure. Just as a day's exercise does not make a valiant hero, one cannot realise their greatness with a single dip. If we are compassionate to all the creatures, chant the name of God sincerely in clean precincts unmindful of the troubles and travails, and drink holy water as a rule with satisfaction, we win God's love and all our desires are fulfilled. This is the implied intention of our Puranas.

“Ganga govu palu garitedainanu chaalu” (“A cow's milk is enough even if it is a spoonful”.)

“Bhaktigalugu koodu - pattedainanu chaalu”
 (“Food taken with devotion is enough even if it is fistful”)

We have to realise the significance of such great sayings. Men should preserve their honour and be devoted to the service of God. This is the intention behind our great Puranas.

Though men may not be able to visit the holy water bodies or shrines, if they simply hear or read about them or meditate upon them, it is a fact that their desires will be fulfilled.

Past sages have deposited a lot of means for the men in Kaliyuga to cross the ocean of life. Puranas are a part of this. Many of the ancient people have attained both food and liberation by following the dictates of Puranas. Kali Yuga is blatantly sinful. Not only many rivers and lakes, but many sacred water bodies have manifested in this holy India in order to cleanse ourselves of this mire of sin.

Where’s the exaggeration in saying that the great rivers—Ganga, Yamuna and their tributaries like Sindhu, Brahma Putra and others, the Southern rivers like Goutami, Krishna, Tungabhadra, Kaveri, Pinakini are all means to earn food and liberation in India. There are many sacred water bodies like Kancana Ganga and Manasasarovar, etc.

Further, there are many holy shrines right from Gourishankar to Kanyakumari and Rameshwaram. Unless we have a divine unguent for the feet, we

cannot visit all those shrines. Keeping this in view, the Lord of Vaikuntha has manifested on Venkatachalam bestowing upon us the fruits of visit to the sacred shrines only to provide us steadfastness from the plagues of the world in the wake of temporary hopes and pleasures.

We can experience the fruits only when we have a profound faith in the existence of God. We have to go on a pilgrimage with faith in its beneficent nature. That is a step to the welfare of humanity.

**“Punyam pavitramaayushyam
maahatmyamidamuttamam,
yah pathetprayato bhaktyaa shrunuyaadwaa likhedapi,
sarvankaamaa na vaapnoti sampraapnoti cha
mangalam”
(Varaha Puranam).**

Gadyam (Prose)

Idi Sri Srinivasa paadaaravinda
dhyaanaamritaaswadana mattachitta, Sri Jnyana
P r a s o o n a m b i k a s a h i t a
Srikalahastishwaraanugrahalabdha kavitaavishesha,
Srikailasavasachintana maanasa sarovara vihaara
maraalamithuna lakshmaarya Lakshmi narasaambaa
dwitiyaputtra, Sri Venkatakrishnaaryaanuja,
budhavidheya guntakatta Tiruvengadasoori
naamadheya pranitambaina Tirumala Tirupati
Kshetramu—Mahatmyamanu kavyamuna
Prathamashwasambu sampoornamu.

Second Chapter (*Dwitiyaashwasamu*)

Ataveladi

Sri Satisha! Deva! Shritajana rakshaka!
Bhakti dalatu ninnu shaktikoladi,
karuna joopi mammu kaapaadu nityambu
Sheshashailavaasa! Srinivaasa!!

Kandam

Kalibaadhamaanpa Tirumala
Kaliyuga Vaikunthamanaga gai sesina mi
Salalita karunaahridayamu
Kalanainanu maruvajaala Kanjadalaksha!

Kandam

Alamelumanga satito
Alarucu nijabkaktajanula nalarinchuchu, ee
Kaliyuga vaikunthudanan
velasedu Tirumalanivasa! Vijayavilasa!

Kandam

Palikeda paavana Tirumala
Salalita charitamu janulaku sammati kaagan
Palikina dantayu shubhamagu
Kaliyuga Vaikunthavaasu kathanam bagutan.

Kandam

Vyasamuni Puraana cayamunandu
Venkateshuni lilalu vedaki vedaki
Jaanu tenuguna viniceda samikathanu
Vedaka vinnanta kaninanta vishada phaniti.

1. Manifestation of Sri Venkatachalapati

Krutetu Narasimhobhoottretutayaam

raghunandanah,

Dwapare Vaasudevasca kalou

Venkatanaayakah!!

According to the Puranas, the Lord of Vaikuntha has been manifesting on the earth in all the four Yugas on one pretext or the other for its upliftment to protect the good and punish the evil for the welfare of the humanity.

In the Kruta Yuga Srihari manifested as Narahari, killed Hiranyakashipu and protected Prahlada.

In the Treta Yuga, Srinivasa born as Sri Rama, son of King Dasharatha, was not satisfied with killing the tribes of giants to the delight of the people, but killed Ravana, the leader of Brahmin fiends and King of Lanka, and taught us that women should not be humiliated. Desiring the welfare of the world, at Chitrakoota he taught Bharata administrative duties as well as social duties like devotion towards the preceptors, abiding by the word of father, the vow of monogamy, protecting the distraught and those who sought his refuge, etc. He behaved in such an exemplary way that even a common man would grasp his political knowledge and follow him. Thus, he drove home the lesson indirectly without explicit teaching.

The Lord of Vaikuntha showed to the world many of the ordained duties of man by following

them himself. That is why, Sri Rama is worshipped even now with great devotion. He protected dharma as a human being and carved out a niche for himself in the hearts of good men.

Observing the shades of Kali in the Dwapara Yuga, the Lord of Vaikuntha manifested as Sri Krishna, behaved like a cowherd (Gopalaka), crushed the arrogant and killed Kamsa who was like Death and saved the world. He steered clear of the slander that came upon him and taught good things to the humanity. As close kin of both Pandavas and Kauravas, he exhibited his political diplomacy and proved protection of dharma as his ultimate objective. On the pretext of preaching the duties of a kshatriya to Arjuna, he taught *Gita* that declared the fraternity of the entire world. He showed the model behaviour of man born of Manu's line, proved what is dharma and what is the ultimate objective, and propagated the truth of the dictum, "Dharma eva Jayate" ("Truth alone wins"). Anticipating the disorders of Kali Yuga, he showed the shades of Kali in Dwapara Yuga itself and the ways to encounter them. Since it is his duty to protect the good and punish the bad, he said that he would manifest in the form required of each Yuga.

Sri Rama and Sri Krishna established their ideals permanently through their behaviour and the divine Gita respectively. They are the ever-burning flames of Hindu culture. Puranas proclaim that Brahma creates the world ridden with creation, sustenance

and dissolution, Vishnu sustains and Shiva dissolves. It is an experienced fact for the humanity. The purpose of Vishnu's incarnations is to execute his own dharma.

The Lord of Vaikuntha anticipated that the cow of Dharma treads only on one foot in Kali Yuga. That is why, he got Kreedadri of Vaikuntha installed on the earth through Garuda. Kreedadri itself has become as famous as Venkatachalam. The Lord of Venkatachalam is Lord Venkateshwara and became famous as "Kalou Venkatanayakah" as the Purana praises.

Puranas proclaim that Venkatachalam shone forth with different names in the four Yugas.

In order to favour Prahlada, the Lord first manifested in the Kruta Yuga as a White Boar (Shweta Varaha) to kill Hiranyaksha and uplift Bhoodevi abducted by the giant. Since then, he continued to stay back in Venkatachalam. Later he took birth as Sri Rama, son of Dasharatha, in the Treta Yuga to punish the wicked. The kavya reveals that the retinue and instruments of Lord of Vaikuntha were born as Bharata-Lakshmana-Shatrughna. It is mentioned in the epic that Sri Rama and Dasharatha visited Venkatachalam, that Sri Krishna sent Pandavas in the Dwapara Yuga for visiting the holy water-bodies of Venkatachalam. That is why, it is known that Venkatachalam shone forth with high glory and sacredness in Kruta, Treta and Dwapara

Yugas. As far as Kali Yuga is concerned, the Lord himself has manifested on Venkatachalam in Ananda Nilayam and is giving his darshan to the devotees and making Tirumala the heaven (Vaikuntha) on the earth.

In the Dwapara Yuga, Yashoda, wife of Nanda in Vrepalle, brought up Sri Krishna like her own son, born of Devaki Devi. As her fascination for the child was not quenched and her desire was not fulfilled by Almighty Sri Krishna, she was serving Varaha Swami as Vakulamata in the beginning.

Venkatachalam is a holy shrine that endows us with the ambrosia of bliss and wealth. Lord of Venkatachalam manifested in it and spent some time in an anthill undetected by anybody. He married Padmavati, daughter of Akasha Raju, then and resided on the banks of river Suvarnamukhi near the hermitage of Agastya. Later, he settled down in Ananda Nilayam built by Emperor Tondaman to protect his devotees. Men will deserve his grace if they listen to, read, or write about the glory of his pastimes. The history of Chola kings and some others testify to this fact.

At the end of Sri Krishna's incarnation, Dwapara Yuga concluded and Kali Yuga commenced. The Creator anticipated that in the sin-infested Kali Yuga, people will be unsteady, mindless and selfish without any spiritual bent of mind; they will be subject to the six inherent foes such as lust, wrath, greed,

infatuation, arrogance and malice without any fear of sin and unable to find a way out, they will scorn the preceptors, elders and parents, and yield to the social disorders, turn justice into injustice and injustice into justice through their arguments. Given to taking bribes, they behave in a sinful way and thus get alienated from liberation. So, the Creator thought of different ways to come to the rescue of the fallen humanity and concluded that Vishnu alone could drive away all these sins and liberate them. He called Narada, born of his inclination.

He briefed Narada about the sinful deeds of the people of Kali Yuga and assigned him the task of contriving the means to make the Lord of Vaikuntha manifest on the earth and succeed in its execution.

At that time Vishnu relapsed into Yoga nidra on his serpent bed thinking of the ways of protecting the people.

2. Sacrifice of Sages: Sage Bhrigu to decide the God of Sattva Guna

People in Kali Yuga were panic-stricken because of the misdeeds of the giants. There was no peace wherever you see. The sages could understand that it was due to the advent of Kali Purusha. In order to quell this turmoil, they met in Naimisharanya and resolved to conduct a great Sacrifice on the banks of Ganga.

They were discussing who could be the recipient of oblation in the Sacrifice. At that time Sage Narada

came to the venue and the sages welcomed him with due honours. In the course of conversation, they informed him about their proposal to conduct a Sacrifice for the welfare of the humanity in the wake of Kali Yuga and their discussion about the recipient of the oblation in the Sacrifice. Narada advised them to worship a God who has sattva guna profusely in the Kali Yuga. The sages then asked him to suggest such a God. Then Narada said, “How can I suggest when there’re great sages like Atri, Vasishtha and Bhrigu among you? Better one of you could go round the three worlds once and find him out.” The sages started discussing who among the three Gods is profusely saattvic. There was no unanimity on this issue. Then Bhrigu said that he would test the triumvirate of Gods (*trimoortulu*) and decide the saattvic God. With the consent of the sages, he commenced his journey to the three worlds.

First Bhrigu went to the Satya Loka. There Brahma was reciting the Vedas with his four faces. Sitting on his couch, Vani was playing the veena rhythmically. The eight demi-gods of directions, other angels and saints were sitting in the court and listening to the instruction of Brahma attentively. Into that full court entered Bhrigu quietly, prostrated before Brahma, stood aside waiting for a glance of Brahma and his reception without batting his eyelids. But Brahma was deeply engrossed in his instruction and did not pay heed to Bhrigu. None of the courtiers greeted him. Bhrigu was slightly angry that Brahma

did not notice him. He thought Brahma was unworthy of worship and turned towards the path of Kailasa.

When Bhrigu reached the Kailasa, Bhrungi, Nandi and Pramatha Ganas were singing the praise of the three-eyed Shiva. Listening to it, the sage entered the inner chamber of the Lord of Kailasa. At that time, the primeval couple were in the excitement of dalliance and fun. Parvati Devi noticed his presence and made a gesture to her consort. But Shankara was a bit angry that Bhrigu's presence disturbed their privacy and looked at him nonchalantly. Noticing this, the sage felt that he should not stay there any longer and left.

Dejected and disappointed with the lack of atmosphere conducive to his task at Satya Loka and Kailasa, Bhrigu reached Vaikuntha somehow. He saw hosts of devotees singing and chanting the name of Srimannarayana there. Recollecting the past experiences, he entered the inner chamber above the palace. Everything was quiet there. Maha Vishnu was asleep on Serpent Sheshu's bed. Sitting at his feet, Lakshmi Devi was pressing them. There was none to greet him. Bhrigu thought that the Lord was pretending to be asleep. Enraged he approached the Lord and gave a wholesome kick on the chest with his left leg. Thinking that Bhrigu's arrival would be conducive to the fulfilment of his intended task, Vishnu pretended to have woken up from his sleep. Looking at him, he said, "Hey Great Sage! Forgive

me for sleeping without taking cognisance of you. Those who undertake penance to acquire merit are holy. The dust of their feet is sacred. I am blessed today. But I regret the pain caused to your feet for hitting my hard chest.” Thus saying, he pressed his feet with his both hands and nipped the eye the sage had underneath his foot. Is there anything unachievable by forbearance? Bhrigu was taken in by the soft words and service of the Lord. But he could not understand the hidden intention of the Lord for the welfare of the world. The Lord has exemplified the extent of softness and forbearance one should possess in the world for achieving one’s task. The Lord patiently washed the feet of the sage that kicked him, sprinkled that water on his head and satisfied him with his brief soothing words. Bhrigu was immensely pleased with the devotion and attention paid to him and decided that Vishnu alone was the best choice among the triad of Gods. He talked to him appropriately and took leave of the Lord of Vaikuntha and left happily for Naimisharanya where the other sages were waiting for him.

Bhrigu reached the gathering of the sages. The sages guessed the positive result from his countenance and said, “Hey Distinguished Saint! Hope you’ve succeeded in your task. But we want to know it from you.” Bhrigu informed them his opinion on Virinchi and Trinetra and to the astonishment of all of them he revealed the way he tested the Lord of Vaikuntha and enacted the Lord’s

preference for sattva guna, his endurance, regard and affection in a dramatic way.

**“Hari ssarvottamah saakshaadramaadevi
tadantara
tadadho vidhivaanyou ca tadadhah sharvapoovakaah”**

Thus saying, he sat down. All the sages were very happy to hear the words of Bhrigu and decided that Maha Vishnu was the best of all gods. They commenced the great Sacrifice and completed it with all its accessories and offered the result of the Sacrifice to Vishnu Deva.

3. Lakshmi Devi’s Departure to Karavirapuram (Kolhapur)

In the Vaikuntha, Vishnu was happy that seeds were sown successfully for his illusory drama with the advent of Bhrigu. But Lakshmi Devi was grief-stricken for the humiliation caused by Bhrigu. She remained silent. The following conversation ensued between them.

“Lakshmi! What’s the matter? You seem to be lost in deep thinking?”

“Hey Lord! Nothing of that sort. I’m worried about the humiliation meted out to me!”

“What? Humiliation?”

“Yes. What else was it? How audacious was that man to have ignored you like that?”

“No, He didn’t intend to insult us!”

“What else was it?”

“Isn’t it a fault of the Head of the family not to notice the arrival of a guest?”

“Isn’t it a fault that the sage should behave like that towards me?”

“When the parents carry their babies in their lap, it’s but natural for the infant to kick them. I think it’s a matter of pleasure and endurance for the parents.”

Lakshmi thinks in her own mind thus: “I think I must’ve incurred some sin in the past life. That’s why my consort was insulted in my abode right before me! I can no longer endure it. I feel reeling sensation in my head! There won’t be peace of mind unless I undertake penance in solitude!” She tells the Lord, “Hey Lord! As the protector of the entire universe, you endure it. But excuse me. I can no longer live in the Vaikuntha. I part with you right now itself!”

“Hey Lakshmi! Why this anguish? Think of everything as mine! I can’t leave my s t a u n c h devotees. They’re, after all, our children. They enact my feelings of beneficence towards the world. The sages will be assisting me in my task of protecting the world.”

“May be! But I can no longer stay here. I’ll have to do penance quietly and cool down my feelings of insult! Hey Narayan! The burden of this

entire animate and inanimate world is yours!
Hence, you can endure it!”

“Yes! It’s true, Lakshmi! You also know that I endure the burden of sustaining this world with your assistance.”

“But my mind isn’t ready to accept it! Listen to my prayer! I’ll quit Vaikuntha right now and stay at Kolhapur.”

Thus, Lakshmi and Narayana contended among themselves. Lakshmi left Vaikuntha for Karavirapuram shrine.”

4. Vishnu Leaving Vaikuntha for Tirumala

It’s but natural that the house without wife turns pale devoid of any lustre. The housewife is an everlasting divine light! Doesn’t the house without light look pitch dark, however big it may be? Wife gives all sorts of pleasures to her husband. Without wife, husband remains mindless and without any direction! Wife coordinates with her husband in executing dharma and thus provides him the pleasures of this world and the other. The Almighty had to conduct himself as per the ideal marital relationship. It reveals that the Lord feels delighted if men emulate him and follow the righteous dharma.

The Lord of Vaikuntha left his abode and began wandering in different places. Lost in the thoughts of how to pacify Lakshmi, he reached the banks of

Ganga. Unable to find peace of mind there, he turned towards the South, crossed the Vindhya mountains and the rivers Godavari, Krishna, Pinakini and reached Venkatachalam at last to the north of Swarnamukhi river. He was a bit relieved to see the beautiful landscape there. The sight of Swami Pushkarini subsequently filled him with greater relief.

The antelopes were freely wandering there. It was a delight to hear the songs of a variety of birds. The peacocks danced providing a feast for the eyes. Huge trees, creepers, bushes looked beautiful with flowers and fruits. Though the jasmine flowers were not there may be out of jealousy for the other flowers of its kind, the spring season was a delight for the eyes with different flowers in full bloom. The Consort of Lakshmi got complete peace of mind. He searched for a habitable place there and found a big anthill in the shade of a tamarind tree with a big door. Immensely pleased, he made it his abode and went on doing penance with commitment.

5. Chola King-The Episode of the Cow

Having come to know about Lord Vishnu's leaving Vaikuntham and doing penance in the anthill of Venkatachalam, the gods went to Satyaloka led by Shankara. Shankara informed Brahma about the Lord's deep penance and asked for the cause of the same. Brahma informed them that Narayana, the protector of the world, left Vaikuntham for Venkatachalam in the southern part of the holy land

of Bharata in order to cleanse the people of their sins in Kali Yuga. In order to perform their part of duty in this holy task, he said to Shankara, “O Lord of Kailasa! To discharge my part of duty, let me become a cow and you become a calf.” He said to the Sun, “Hey Aditya! Inform Lakshmi who is in Karavirapuram about our task and beckon her to assume the guise of a cowherd to take the cow and calf to Narayanapuram, an important city of Venkatadri area of the kingdom under the rule of Chola King, and convince her to sell them (us) to him. Tell her that it’s the Lord of Vaikuntha’s task of protecting the world!” Thus saying, he sent the Sun to Karavirapuram. In order to perform his part of the duty, the Sun went to Lakshmi of Karavirapuram and reiterated what Brahma told him and brought her. In the meanwhile, Brahma and Shankara turned a cow and calf respectively and were ready for the task. In order to perform her part of the task, Lakshmi Devi went to Narayanapuram and waited near the royal palace along with the cow and calf. The servants of the inner chamber of the palace informed the king that an unknown shepherdess came there to sell a milch cow and a calf. Immediately the king observed the cow and the calf from the palace itself and decided to buy them. He paid the price quoted by the lady and bought them. Lakshmi Devi went back to Karavirapuram. The king entrusted them to the cowherd to retain them in his herd of cows and graze them properly and went back to the inner chamber. The cowherd used to

take the cow along with his other cows to Venkatachalam for grazing. The cow used to feed well and yield a lot of milk. The queen was also contented with the milk-yield of the cow and ordered the cowherd to feed it specially with good fodder in a basket. The calf also drank milk to its full stomach and capered in the backyard to the amusement of the servants of the inner chamber.

The Chola king of the day was a just and righteous man. He used to rule the people treating them like his own children. He was virtuous and moral-bound. His kingdom was quite prosperous. Plenty of water and green fodder were available for the cows. The tribe of cows prospered well. There were rains thrice a month and there was good crop yield. There was no famine. The people were loyal to the king and lived quite comfortably in harmony with tolerance and without any differences among themselves. Even the people of a small hamlet were good hosts. They had respect for the elders, reverence for the parents, generosity for the poor, inclination for meritorious deeds, adherence to the truth, fear of sin, etc adding to the glory of the king.

The cowherd used to tie it up separately in the shed, milch the cow, send the milk to the queen's palace, untie the cow after the calf sucked the milk, and send it along with the herd to graze at Venkatachalam. This was his daily duty. The cow used to go away from the herd at Venkatachalam secretly to the ant-hill where Srinivasa was doing

penance, keep her udders at the hole of the ant-hill and stream her milk into the mouth of the Lord and later join back the herd to return home. As days passed by, the calf was getting leaner and leaner. The news that the cow was not yielding milk reached the queen's chamber. She called the cowherd one day and enquired about it, but the cowherd replied that he could not understand anything about it. The queen did not trust his words and rebuked him thinking that he was milking the cow. She warned him that he would be held responsible if the cow did not yield milk. She asked him to keep an eye on the movements of the new cow. The next day, the cowherd took the cow to Venkatachalam and kept a watch on it. As usual the cow went to the ant-hill and streamed the milk through the hole. Seeing this the cowherd burst into anger that he had to take the blame due the cow's act. When He threw the axe in his hand at the cow Srinivasa raised his head from the ant-hill to protect the cow. The axe hit the head of Srinivasa causing head injury. Blood gushed forth from it. The cowherd was stupefied at the sight of blood and fell down dead. The cow ran swiftly towards Narayanapuram.

6. The Cow beckoning the Chola King - Srinivasa's Curse and the Atonement

The cow at once reached the royal palace mooing "amba!". It stood before the king nodding her head. The king could grasp the gestures of the cow and guessing that some accident took place he

followed it to Venkatachalam and from there to the anthill on the banks of Swami Pushkarani. He was surprised to find the cowherd dead and the bloodshed on the ground. He said to himself, “There’s none here. The cowherd is dead without any injury on his body. Why this bloodshed?” In the meanwhile, Srinivasa rose from the anthill and said to the king, “Hey King! You’re a sinner. You’re proud of your kingdom. You don’t know what’s good or bad. I’ve no parents. Leaving my relations, I’m facing troubles. I’m faultless and yet you’ve broken my head through your servant. Just as the Head of the family is responsible for the sins committed by the members of the family, the king is held responsible for the mistakes committed by his people. It’s not the pleasure alone that a king can share; he has to bear the lapses of his people too. You can’t escape the consequences of your servant’s sin. Hence, you become a fiend.” Thus, the Lord cursed the king.

It was a bolt from the heavens for the king. He was stunned for a while. It occurred to him that the divine person was none other than Maha Vishnu. He prostrated before him, folded his hands together, and said in all humility, “Hey Lord! Protector of the World! I don’t know any sin. This speechless cow came to my palace, mooed and beckoned me to go with her. I thought that some strange thing might have happened and accompanied it to this place, saw the condition here and came to know about it

through you. Forgive me and withdraw the curse.” Srinivasa relented a bit and consoled him thus, “Hey valiant king! You’re able to see me because of your past merit. Your ancestors were Pandavas who were dear to me. They belong to the Lunar dynasty. And you are one of them. I’m pleased with your devotion. But there’s no going back on the curse. I’ve great love for my devotees. I can do anything for their sake. You’ll undergo the curse for some time and then you’ll be redeemed after bathing in this Swami Pushkarini. Later you’ll beget a son named Sudharma who in turn begets two sons namely Akasha Raju and Tondaman. I’ll marry the daughter of Akasha Raju. Then you’ll go to the heaven.” The cow and calf assumed their original forms of Brahma and Maheshwara and returned to their worlds. Suvira was happy with the words of the Lord. He stayed in Venkatadri for some time in the form of a spirit and got relieved of his curse due to the holy dip in Swami Pushkarini. He ruled his kingdom once again to the satisfaction of the people. He got a son after some time. He named him Sudharma. As the son grew to be an adult, he married him to Manorama Devi and gave his kingdom. He did penance at Venkatachalam and later reached the heaven.

7. Union of Varaha Swami and Srinivasa: Vakulamalika’s Service

After the departure of Chola King, Srinivasa recollected Brihaspati and asked him for the remedy to his wound. Brihaspati brought some herbs, ground

them and laid a cotton bandage with it on the injury. Asking them to lay it repeatedly, he left.

One day Srinivasa was wandering in the forest for herbs. At that time, Varaha Swami was returning after killing the wicked demons. On the way he saw Srinivasa and asked him who he was. Instead of replying to him, Srinivasa speedily retreated to his anthill. After prolonged thinking, Varaha Swami came to the conclusion that he must be the Lord of Vaikuntha and accosted him at the anthill. Srinivasa realised that Varaha Swami was an incarnation of his own and came out of the anthill. The angels also came to know that those Lords of different forms were of the same radiance and let loose a rain of flowers on them, eulogised them and left.

Later, Varaha Swami asked Srinivasa why he had to leave Vaikuntha. Vishnu recounted his story in detail—Sage Bhrigu's visit to Vaikuntha and kicking him on the chest finding him asleep, Lakshmi's exit from the Vaikuntha, his leaving the Vaikuntha for the earth unable to bear wife's separation, visit to different holy rivers, reaching the Vindhya mountains, travelling to the south of Vindhya as there was no alleviation of the pain of separation, crossing the Gautami, Krishna and Penna rivers, visiting Suvarnamukhi river, arriving at last at Venkatachalam, and doing penance in the anthill at a tamarind tree there assuming that the beautiful landscape and Swami Pushkarini would assuage his unrest. He also explained about the head injury to Varaha Swami

who asked him in turn, “Hey Protector of the Worlds! How long will you be here?” “Till the end of Kali Yuga,” replied Srinivasa. Varaha Swami said, “I think you’ve come here to redeem the humanity from their troubles in this Yuga. I’ve also grasped your intention of making the human beings tread the moral path of good dharma possessing the spiritual wealth. You’ve incarnated on the earth a number of times for the protection of the world. It’s evident that you wanted to relieve the people of Kali Yuga from their sins and turn Venkatachalam into a heaven on the earth. This place is called Varaha’s place and hence you need to pay some amount in advance to live here.”

“O.K. But at present Lakshmi has left me. How can I pay the amount to you?”

“Hey Srinivasa! I understand you wanted to live here to augur well for the people. It’s enough if you promise to pay off the first part of the offerings made to you by your devotees who flock to you regularly in hundreds and thousands.”

“Very good! May it be so! The visitors of Venkatachalam for a glimpse of mine will bathe in Swami Pushkarini, visit you, submit their offerings, take your darshan seeking your blessings first and only then they’ll come for my darshan and submit their offerings to me. I’ll receive such offerings of those devotees with great pleasure. I love those who first have your darshan and then mine. My first regard

is for them.” Varaha Swami said, “May it be so!” He talked to him duly thus for some time and took leave of him informing that he would send his cook Vakula to serve Srinivasa.

Back home, Varaha Swami told Vakula Devi, “Hey Mother! It’s time for fructification of your desire. In that corner under the tamarind tree lives your Sri Krishna who came down from Vaikuntha as Srinivasa. Now he is suffering from a head injury. Go there, serve him and fulfil your desire of Showing affection for the offspring. Vakula was overjoyed that her desire is going to be fulfilled. She took leave of Varaha Swami and reached the abode of Srinivasa. Seeing her, Srinivasa was delighted. He called her, “Mother!” and offered obeisance to her as tears of joy swelled. Vakula embraced him contentedly. She fondled him considering him her Sri Krishna of childhood. She could utter just, “My dear son!” and couldn’t speak further for some time. To divert her from the pensive mood, Srinivasa told her, “Mother! It’s paining in my head!” Recovering from the illusion, Vakula told him, “I’ll get the medicines just now” and left for the forest immediately. She brought some herbal leaves, extracted their juice and tied a knot with the lilac cotton steeped in it. Treating him like an infant, she was serving him duly dressing the wound daily and feeding him with fruits.

After his recovery, Srinivasa used to go to the forest and get some tubers, fruits, forest rice, bamboo

seed, honey and other edibles to the mother's delight. Vakula was also cooking delicious food items to the liking of Srinivasa and fondling him like her own son. Being Yashoda of past life, she treated Srinivasa as Sri Krishna only and sought fulfilment in her life adorning him in different ways. Srinivasa also treated her like his own mother with great humility, showing utmost affection, devotion and courtesy.

8. Life History of Akasha Raju and Tondaman

There lived in the past a Vedic scholar by name Madhava. He was committed to religious austerities. By the will of fate, he fell for a woman named Kundala, forcibly ravished her with lust, married her and moved to the forest itself. Kundala died in due course. Consequently, Madhava started wandering aimlessly like a mentally deranged person. By the will of fate, he joined good company and went on a pilgrimage to holy places, bathed in Kapila and Venkatachala Tirthams as well as Swami Pushkarini, visited Varaha Swami and became sanctified. Because of his past merit, he died in Venkatadri and was reborn in his next birth as son of Sudharma, king of Chola kingdom of Venkatachalam region, and his wife Manorama Devi. He grew up with the name of Akasha Raju.

Ever since Akasha Raju was born, there were timely rains, good water sources resulting in good crops. The cows yielded plenty of milk due to

availability of good grass. The people lived happily without any worldly troubles with abundance of crops.

One day, Sudharma went hunting in a forest. As he could not find wild animals fit for hunting, he reached Venkatachalam forest in search of them. He saw cruel beasts there and killed the lions, shaardhoolas and other animals lest they harm the saints and tame animals. He felt thirsty and searching for water, he saw Kapila Tirtham down the Sheshadri hill.

Getting down the steps of the lake, Sudharma saw a young lady bathing in water. He went to her moved by lust and let her know his desire. Then, she said to him, “Hey sir! I’m the only daughter of Dhananjaya, a Naga king. My father wanted to marry me to a kshatriya of well-known dynasty. I can’t go against his wishes.”

“Then you may know that I’m a kshatriya of Lunar dynasty. I am ruling the Chola kingdom of this region. It’s well within the ordained norms of kshatriyas to marry as per Gandharva mode.”

“May be. I’ve a submission. Promise me that you would anoint my son to be born with you as king.”

“I’ve already had a son. It’s not possible to anoint the younger son as king when there’s the eldest son.”

“If so, let the kingdom be divided between the two.”

Sudharma agreed to it and happily married by exchanging the rings. He spent some time in fun, loitering about in the bimba bushes. One day, the Naga lady expressed her intention to go back to the Naga world. The king consented to it and told her, “Rear the child in your womb and send him to me after he attains a certain age. At that time, adorn him with the ring I gave you and send him so that I can recognise him. I’ll take him into my fold and anoint him with the half of my kingdom.” Thus saying, he saw her off.

The Naga lady reached her world and recounted the entire story to her father. Her father who knows about the Chola king felt happy about her marriage with him. After some time, the lady begot a son after completion of nine months. She brought him up for sixteen years, educated him, took permission of her father and told the son, “Dear son! You’ve to go to father now to learn the duties of a king and the studies required for the kshatriyas. On the earth, Your father by name Sudharma is the Chola king in the Venkatachalam region on the earth. Wear this ring. As you go from Naga loka to the earth, you’ll come across Kapila Tirtham. Near it are a few bimba bushes. While seeing the king, you surround your waist with those tendrils and show this ring.” Thus saying, she instructed him about the decorum to be

followed, accompanied him for a while and bade him farewell.

As directed by his mother, the son entered the earth crossing the Underworld, visited Kapila Tirtham, collected some bimba bushes, entwined them around his waist, reached Narayanapuram and was waiting at the inner chamber for the king's darshan. The attendants there informed the king about his arrival. As per the orders of the king, the attendants took the boy inside the palace. Seeing the son, the royal seal on his finger and the bimba tendrils around his waist, the king recalled his affair with the Naga lady, how he strolled around with her, the promise he made to her, and enjoyed the pleasure of his embrace. He told his wife about the entire story of the son. He introduced him to Akasha Raju and other relations, friends and attendants. As a sign of the bimba (donda) tendril, he named his son Tondaman. He divided the kingdom into two equal parts, gave away the western and northern parts with Narayanapuram as the capital to his eldest son Akasha Raju and the eastern and southern parts to his second son Tondaman along with a hundred attendants, servants and other retinue to each of them. He constructed a big fort to the west of Suvarnamukhi river and a trench around it. A beautiful inner palace was constructed for Tondaman. He named Tondaman's new portion of kingdom Tondamanadu. Thus, Sudharma fulfilled the promise he had made to the Naga lady by dividing the

kingdom. As Tondaman and Akasha Raju were children, Sudharma continued to rule the kingdom on behalf of them. Both the sons were affectionate to each other and were growing together without violating the commands of their father to the delight of the people.

Tondamanadu of that day is still there on the banks of Suvarnamukhi river to the southwest of Sri Kalahasti. There are small hamlets in that region. The walls of the fort of that day lasted a long time. At present there are trenches and foundations of the fort. The big tank dug by Emperor Tondaman is still there well-known under the name Tondamanati cheruvu. The Venkateshwara temple built by him is still there as a relic of the past. Though Sudharma divided the kingdom equally between Akasha Raju and Tondaman, the brothers were like Sri Rama and Lakshmana with inseparable friendship. Both the kingdoms were ruled by the kings of Narayanapuram. Sudharma was quite happy about the unity of both the sons and the way their kingdoms were ruled to the appeasement of the people. So, he performed their marriages, initiated them into the righteous duties of public administration, went to Venkatachalam with peace of mind and attained liberation through penance.

There was perfect harmony between Akasha Raju and his wife Dharani Devi in their grace, virtues, devotion to God, public welfare activities causing great delight to the people. The people of the

kingdom were living happily with peace and plenty. They were devoted to the king, aware of the duties of the ruler and the ruled and got their necessities fulfilled by appealing them to the king. The people of the kingdom were selfless and strove for the summum bonum of life. Without being lazy, they were living happily with hard work. They used to pay taxes to the king regularly as per rules. It was a period of dharma. The king got the inns constructed for the guests and arranged for the facilities.

Tondaman was ably ruling the portion of the kingdom his father assigned to him. He married the daughter of Pandya king. For irrigation of fields, he got a big lake dug and a canal constructed from Suvarnamukhi river to provide source of water. The lake was big enough to provide water to the entire state. Even today it is called Tondaman lake.

Thus, both the brothers were ruling the Narayanapuram and Tondamanadu kingdoms as one entity with mutual intimacy aiming at the welfare of the people. The people were quite prosperous in their rule.

9. Discovery of Padmavati and Birth of Vasunayaka

Though Akasha Raju and Dharani Devi were enjoying happy, youthful married life, they could not beget children. Dharani Devi observed many vows and religious observances. She gave away a lot in charity, fed the poor and sanctified the images of

Naga. Akasha Raju too was worried in many ways that there would be no auspicious worlds without children. He obtained the blessings of the Vedic scholars and the poor by gratifying them with his charitable deeds. He consulted the astrologers about his fortune as per the horoscope. The astrologers predicted the fortune of offspring to him as per the position of the planets at the time of his birth and the effect of his Zodiac sign. Yet, his mind was possessed by the pain of childlessness like a big demon. He was obsessed by the mental agony. It was troubling like a disease though not a real disease.

One day, the king called a meeting of Vedic scholars, saints enriched by penance, and astrologers, and appealed to them to let him know about the cause of his childlessness. All of them probed into the past, present and future of the king, his horoscope at the time of birth and the methods Shaastras prescribed as per their abilities and unanimously advised him, “Hey king! In the past when the king of Solar dynasty had no children though he had three wives, he visited Venkatachalam, performed Putra Kameshti sacrifice and begot four precious sons as per the instructions of the family preceptor Vashishta. This is what the Purana says. So, it’s better you also visit Venkatachalam and conduct the sacrifice for children. You’ll beget children.”

The king was very much pleased to listen to their words and requested the great saints, Vedic

scholars, astrologers and his own brahmin priests to contribute to the success of his effort to undertake sacrifice. They decided the eligible land for the sacrifice at an auspicious hour.

Akasha Raju had the darshan of Venkatachalam, and got ready to till the land with a golden plough at the fixed auspicious hour. At that time all the great sages, scholars in Vedas, Puranas, ordained spiritual sciences and the priests of the sacrifice gathered at the venue and conducted the ritual as ordained by the Vedas. At the auspicious hour (hora) of muhurtam, Akasha Raju worshipped all the angels and eight demigods of directions and kept the mantric turmeric rice on his head as a sign of their blessings. Taking the approval of the elders, he started ploughing the land. First, he ploughed two turns and then took up the third one. The plough ran smoothly for some distance and then got stuck in the middle due to some obstacle. When the workers dug that place with the crow-bar, there emerged a box. They retrieved it carefully. All the elders gathered around it. The king opened the door of the box. Lying there was a young girl among the tender lotuses shining like a full Moon. There was no end to their joy. All of them offered their blessings in different ways to the king and said, “Hey king! Janaka obtained Sita as daughter in the past. She was none other than Lakshmi herself. Because of your virtue, you too have got that Lakshmi Devi herself as daughter. Name her Padmavati.” Thus

saying, the priest took the baby girl up with her linen and handed over to the king. The king took her into his lap and went into the inner chamber with the consent of the elders. Dharani Devi came to know about the good news through her spies and received the king warmly. The king handed over the baby girl to his wife in great rapture and said, “We’ve obtained Padmavati. Bring her up as your own daughter.” The companions of the queen too were immensely happy. The citizens celebrated the event with a lot of fun and frolic. The naming ceremony was held. The king duly honoured the scholars and priests. Poor people were fed. The Vedic scholars were given plenty of charity in terms of gold, land and cows. The entire kingdom was jubilant at the news. Tondaman too was extremely happy that his brother got a daughter. As time passed, the girl gradually grew up humming, identifying her parents, looking at the surroundings, smiling, rolling over, crawling and toddling. Padmavati was as dear as the soul to the parents. Two years passed thus hearing her indistinct words.

Dharani Devi was pregnant then. Nine months passed. On an auspicious moment when the Sun was in Aries and the Jupiter was in Cancer, she gave birth to a son who was resplendent with all the royal traits. The king’s long-felt desire was fulfilled that day. He was on cloud nine. All the people of his kingdom were in great delight. The king called the Vedic scholars and priests and celebrated the birth,

naming and cradle ceremonies. The boy grew up well like the waxing Moon and the ceremonies like first feeding of solid food, piercing the ear-lobes, tonsure and giving the first lesson in the alphabet were conducted. Named Vasunayaka, the prince learnt all sorts of education to the delight of his parents. Thus, Akasha Raju had a daughter named Padmavati and a son named Vasunayaka.

Whoever saw Padmavati felt she was manifestly the Goddess Lakshmi. In addition to the material wealth, she has the wealth of grace, virtues and character. Both Padmavati and Vasunayaka grew up with grace and charm and used to play childhood games and learn different kinds of studies. Padmavati used to stroll in the pleasure-gardens, play with her maids a sort of morris-dance in the inner chamber and other games with balls, etc., to the great delight of the parents. Vasunayaka also used to play with his friends, do exercise, learn Vedic studies, economics, dharma shastra and law from the preceptors with rapt attention and devotion in all his humility. Both the children were like the two eyes for the parents.

10. Srinivasa's Pleasure-trip

It was spring, the king of seasons. It was the time for the Nature's beauty to exult. The streams were in full swing with sweet water. The creepers and bushes were replete with flowers of variegated colours, buds, nuts and fruit. Trees were bending

down with the burden of fruits as if they were inviting the wayfarers to receive them. The spring was filled with the natural grace of the flowers. The Sun seems to impart the necessary warmth to all the trees, pastures, flowers, and set in the west unwillingly after witnessing their grace and charm.

It was the mating season for the wild animals. They graze the green grass, swell and sport in delight. The cuckoos get drowsy eating the tender mango shoots and fly in leisure singing. If the mute creatures also go into raptures at the beauty of the spring and incite passion in the visitors, what can we say about the young couples and their pleasure-walks? It is common for the young to get excited by their age and the surroundings.

Padmavati, the young damsel of inner chamber, looked as if she were relishing the fresh spring. Along with her maids, she was singing and playing in the gardens, groves, and thickets and enjoying the spring.

This was the daily activity of Venkatachalapati in the spring time. With his youthful splendour appearing like a god, he used to get up in the morning, bathe in the Pushkarini, wear the golden garments, draw a thick upright mark on the forehead, daub the sandal paste on the body, adorn a pogada garland, have the morning mini-meal served by Vakula, chew the betel pack, take the bow and arrows, wear golden footwear (padukas), mount the horse that appeared as soon as he thought of it, take leave of his mother

Vakula and go out on a pleasure trip. He used to punish the cruel animals and protect the tame animals. Tired of hunting, he used to get off the horse, tie it in the shade of a young mango tree and rest for a while. In the evening he used to wander in the surroundings, gather the fruits and tubers he liked, and ride back to the abode much to the delight of his mother.

11. Narada's Palm-reading of Padmavati

One day Padmavati was loitering around the garden plucking the flowers and twining them into a garland. The maids were also wandering about the forest to collect flowers, fruits and henna leaves. Padmavati reached the shade of a thick Pogada tree and sat on a stone slab.

At that time omniscient Narada who wanders about the three worlds came there in the disguise of an old saint as if to sow the seeds of love in her. Seeing Padmavati alarmed at his presence, Narada said, "Hey Mother! Don't be afraid. I'm an old saint who has come here desiring your welfare. I want to read your palm to know who your bridegroom would be. You're not an ordinary lady. Akasha Raju obtained you on account of his past merit. You're born of divine aspect. I'll let you know who would match your beauty and elegance. Show me your left palm!" Padmavati at once got down from her seat, saluted him and wanted him to sit at the stone slab. Smiling gently, she looked at him with frightened

looks like those of a gazelle, bent down her head shyly and showed him her left hand. Narada read the signs on her palm for a while, raised his eyebrows, nodded his head, acted as though he was greatly delighted and said, “Oh! Mother! You’re really the mother of this entire universe! Only the Lord of all the worlds will be a bridegroom for you to match the wealth of your age and graceful form. There’s no doubt! In the past Rukmini resolved to marry Sri Krishna having heard about his graceful form and virtues. You’ll also marry Purushottama. Your flowers of desire will bloom and get fructified. Venus who is responsible for marriage is quite favourable to you being in the Zodiac sign of Pisces. Soon you’re going to wear a bracelet. The groom himself will come to you searching. The angels will play the role of elders for the marriage.” Hearing these words Padmavati could not hide her inner feelings of joy in her face. Having succeeded in his effort, Narada blessed her and left.

12. Srinivasa’s Union with Padmavati

As usual one day Srinivasa set out for strolling in the forest. He tied the quiver to his back, held the bow and arrows in his hand, wore colourful short dress, shirt and turban around his head. As he went out riding on a horse like a hunter, Mother Vakula saw him off for a long time and went back into her abode.

Riding the horse at a fast pace, he saw two big tigers fighting each other and reduced the speed at

once. The horse neighed. Srinivasa killed both the tigers with one arrow in a moment and continued his flight. After some distance, he saw a few deer galloping out of fear. He looked in front of him and found an elephant coming there trumpeting. This elephant in rut which was the cause of deer's fear was fast approaching him. No sooner had he aimed his arrow at it than the elephant turned back and fled out of fear. As Srinivasa was chasing it, it entered a garden, trumpeted, saluted him raising his trumpet and disappeared. Surprised Srinivasa inspected the four directions and entered the garden in search of the elephant.

It was a small garden built by Akasha Raju. Padmavati strolls in this garden daily, collects the flowers and fruits and returns to the city. That day Padmavati came to the garden and sat down alone on a stone slab sending the maids away to collect flowers. Meanwhile, Srinivasa came there in search of the elephant. Seeing her he stopped for a while enchanted by her beauty. Jagannatha got off the horse and started approaching her taking her for Rama Devi.

Seeing the advent of a stranger, Padmavati was overtaken by surprise, fear and bewilderment. Being a princess, she gathered her courage, got up and asked, "Who're you? I'm a princess alone here. Why do you approach me?"

"Hey Lady! I belong to a royal dynasty. I'm Sri Krishna. My parents are Devaki and Vasudeva. I

was chasing an elephant in rut that entered this garden and disappeared. In the course of my search, I've come across you. As a prince, I felt love for you. I want to marry you in the Gandharva mode befitting the kshatriya clan." Recalling the words of Narada uttered the day before, Padmavati felt the seeds of love sprouting in her heart for the man. Unable to respond, she lowered her head, looked askance at him and stood still. Understanding her intention, Srinivasa hardly put two steps forward cheerfully when the maids rushed to the spot shouting at Srinivasa and stood between him and Padmavati. Srinivasa went back four steps. Padmavati heaved a long sigh. The maids questioned him, "Hey sir! Who're you? You appear to hail from a great dynasty. But how dare you approach our lonely princess? Do you think that the princess is alone? As long as we watch her with a thousand eyes, not even a male wasp can touch her. Beware! If our king comes to know of it, you'll realise the consequences! Get back the way you'd come here without turning back!"

"I've come here tracing her to be a match to me in age, form and virtues like a shade following the figure."

"What sir? You're crossing your limits! Don't you know that our king is Akasha Raju?"

"I know it already."

"Do you approach our princess though you know it?"

“Is it a mistake for a bee to reach the flower he needs?”

“Mistake? It’s a blunder! Do you think she is a flower on a creeper or a branch of a tree?”

“No; I thought she’s a fondly nursed rose flower in the inner palace amidst thorns.”

“What? Stop your innuendoes, O Lord! Our king severely punishes the wicked. Better you quit this place before our king senses the matter.”

“First you listen to my words and leave us both here!”

As soon as Srinivasa said this, a maid said to another maid, “Hey Vijaya! Take my horse and swiftly ride to the town and inform the king about this ‘learned man’ and bring some soldiers. Then, Vijaya was about to approach the horse. The horse didn’t allow her to come near it and was kicking back in the air. Some other maids went in support to her and started throwing stones at the horse. Beaten thus, the horse fell down. In the meanwhile, a maid said, “I’ll go myself and get the king here!” Padmavati held her arm and stopped her. Srinivasa started laughing. The maids started ridiculing him taking him for a mad man. Srinivasa said to them, “Do you recognise now this mad lover?” The maids then surrounded her and escorted her back to the city. Padmavati left with them looking back at him again and again. Srinivasa stood still, looking at her.

Padmavati expedited her steps to the inner chamber along with her maids.

Srinivasa stood still absorbed in the thoughts of Padmavati for a long time gazing at her trodden path.

The Sun was setting. The darkness of twilight was gradually enveloping. The Moon was rising in the east with a cheer showing gradually different kinds of smiles as he expanded. Srinivasa felt shy finding his brother-in-law Moon peeping through the clouds. He woke up the horse and left for his abode in Venkatachalam.

13. Vakulamma's Enquiry about Srinivasa's Gloom

Vakulamma was waiting for Srinivasa anxious about the delay in his reaching home despite the onset of dusk. It was a Full-Moon Day. Everything was visible clearly as in the broad daylight. But there was no trace of her son. She had varied thoughts in her mind. It was late night. She was worried about Srinivasa. Then she heard distant clip-clop of the hoofs of the horse. She was delighted to see her son after some time. But Srinivasa did not greet her and hand over the fruits, etc to her as usual. He simply got off the horse, sent it away, and bending his head down he retreated into the bed-room to lie down on the bed. Vakulamma was at a loss. She went to him slowly and tried to interact with him in many ways in vain. In a choked voice she entreated

him, “O dear son! What’s my mistake? Why don’t you speak to me? What’s your trouble? Let me know. Parents can’t stand the troubles of their children. Don’t you understand how my heart aches for you? Who disturbed you and why? If you let me know, I’ll do whatever I can, to pacify your mind.” Srinivasa heaved a long sigh and spoke to her turning to her, “Mother! This evening in the area of kingdom of Venkatachalam, I saw a young lady by name Padmavati, who it appears is the daughter of Akasha Raju. She attracted me with her sharp looks. My mind is fixed on her. I’m unable to turn it back.”

“Dear son! Why do you crave for the grapes beyond your reach? Does the daughter of the king who rules Narayanapuram aspire for a man who lives in the forests and hills? Even if she does so, does the king agree to it?”

“No. It’s not like that, mother. She has also reciprocated my love. She’s born and brought up for me. Don’t you know I’m authorised to receive the sacrificial offering? If you’re interested, I’ll let you know the story of her past life. Listen!” Thus saying, Srinivasa started recounting the account of Padmavati’s past life.

14. Padmavati’s Past Life

“Once upon a time, a sage by name Kushadhwaja built a cottage in the region of Himalayas and was worshipping me with deep devotion with daily rituals of sacrifice without any

desire. One day he kindled the fire worshipfully and started eulogising me with the Vedic hymns. He was surprised to hear an infant's cry on the sacred grass kept near the sacrificial fire. He was delighted assuming that she was born for himself. Since she was born at the time of chanting the Vedic hymns, he named her Vedavati and brought her up. The girl was full of devotion for me right from her childhood. She used to clean the altar of worship, draw patterns with flour (*muggulu*) and keep the sacred grass, flowers, fruit and water ready for worship. One day after attaining puberty, she told her father, "Father! I want to marry Maha Vishnu. The rest is your will." The saint was delighted at the highest ideal of his daughter and said, "Dear daughter! Your aspiration is great. Such aspiration is welcomed by the virtuous men. It'll be fulfilled any time even if it be long. May your desire be fulfilled! It is Better that you do penance for Vishnu for fulfilment and realise his grace." Once upon a time, Parvati wanted to marry Parameshwara and did penance with the permission of her father Himavanta in the Himalayas and attained the three-eyed Lord as her husband. So, you may also go to the Himalayas and do penance in a place conducive to your vow and commence your penance. Have faith in the Lord that he will fulfil your desire any time, however long it may take." As per the advice of her father, Vedavati went to the Himalayas, built a cottage near a cascade and undertook penance.

After a few days, Ravana, the emperor of Lanka, was going in a vimana for a pleasure trip. When he reached the peaks of Himalayas, he saw Vedavati doing penance. He descended there and approached her. Disturbed her meditation, she opened her eyes and saw around. Though she saw a terrible figure before her, she was unmoved and continued her penance shutting her eyes. Then Ravana went near to her and said, “Hey charming lady! I’m pleased with your penance. Favour me.”

“Who’re you? Why’ve you come here?”

“I’m Ravana, the emperor of Lanka. I’ve come here like a bee searching for the blooming flower. There is barely any delay in relishing the honey!”

“Hey Ravana! Overtaken by lust, you’re not aware of what you’re talking. Get away without uttering a single inappropriate word!”

“I’m here to take you along with me. How can I go back alone?”

“Stop your crooked talk! Go far away from here!”

“It’s not crooked talk, but love talk. Come on and sit in my carriage.” Thus saying, Ravana was about to fall on her when Vedavati got up, moved away from him and looked at him sternly. Ravana commented, “What a strange lustre is added to your face by your protruding eyes?” Again, he dashed upon her. Resolving not to be exposed to his savage

act, she cursed him, “Hey indiscreet fellow! Violence against women will cause destruction of your dynasty!” and jumped into the devouring flames of wildfire. Disappointed, Ravana went back.

The Fire-God took Vedavati securely and entrusted her to his wife Swaha Devi to take care of her like her own daughter.

In the Treta Yuga I was born as Srirama, son of Dasharatha of Solar dynasty and his chief queen Kousalya to fulfil the prayers of angels and kill the giants. Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna were born to the other wives of Dasharatha, namely—Kaikeyi and Sumitra. I broke Shiva’s Arc, fulfilling the wager and married Sita. I had to go into exile in forest along with Sita and Lakshmana for full fourteen years in order to abide by my father’s promise to Kaikeyi. While I was in Dandakaranya, Ravana’s sister Shoorpanakha’s misbehaviour was punished by Lakshmana who cut her nose and ears. She went back to Lanka and provoked Ravana to marry Sita. So, Ravana wanted to abduct Sita with the help of his maternal uncle Maricha who was earlier hit by me. As Maricha wandered in disguise as a golden deer around the cottage, Sita desired to possess it. I chased it through the forest and killed it with an arrow at last sensing its fraudulent conjuring. At the time of death, the disguised deer uttered, “Ha! Sita! Lakshmana!”. Hearing the cry, Sita sent Lakshmana away to fetch me. In the meanwhile, Ravana came as a guest and while she came out to offer alms to

him, he abducted Sita unearthing the ground under her feet. Hearing Sita's wail, Fire-God encountered him along with Vedavati and said, "Hey Ravana! You're leaving without any discretion. Alas! When somebody is possessed by the poison of lust, he won't be able to see anything! He cannot differentiate people."

"Ah! What do you say, O Fire-God!"

"The lady you abducted is conjured Sita. In fact, Sri Rama had heard while you were revealing your plans to Maricha. Instantly he called me and asked me to safeguard her in my home and retained conjured Sita with him. That Sita is now in your chariot."

"Oh, I see! Fire-God! You've come in time. Replace this Sita with yours and quit this place quickly. I've to get back to Lanka before Rama arrives here." Saying thus, Ravana fled to Lanka along with Vedavati.

Vedavati was in the Ashokavana in Lanka. Tracing her, Hanuman informed me where she was. I built a bridge to Lanka along with the army of monkeys and put an end to Ravana, Kumbhakarna and other giants. But, in order to prove her chastity to the world, the illusory Sita entered the fire. The Fire-God then took back Vedavati into his fold and handed over real Sita to me. He explained the episode of Sage Kushadhwaja and Vedavati's wish and asked me to accept Vedavati also as my wife.

As I was bound by the vow of single wife in my incarnation as Rama, I gave a way out to Fire-God to fulfil his command and Vedavati's wish, "Hey Fire-God! In the forthcoming Kaliyuga the people of the earth will be interested in sinful activities. To protect them from sins, I'll be manifesting as Venkateshwara in Venkatachalam. This Vedavati will be available to Akasha Raju, king of Narayanapuram in that area as Padmavati just as Janaka obtained Sita. I'll marry her then. Till then you retain her in Brahmaloaka." Accordingly, Vedavati herself is reborn as Padmavati in the family of Akasha Raju. Mother! Now you may try for my marriage with Padmavati," said Venkatachalapati.

Hearing the episode of Padmavati's birth, Vakula Devi thought, "Destiny is inevitable. It happens on its own. Others are only a means. Not even Brahma has the ability to set aside the divine resolution. He can't reduce it a bit. What is to happen happens. The timing is also decided. But human effort is necessary. The result is in the hands of the Almighty. I'll put in my efforts and see that the task is fruitful." She said to him, "Dear son! I'll be busy in my effort to get you married. I hope my way will be clear and auspicious." Thus, she satisfied him. Srinivasa too was satisfied with Vakulamma like a rustic.

15. Vakulamma's Visit to Dharani Devi

The behaviour of Padmavati who returned from the garden was quite strange. She was always lost in

some thought or the other. She was babbling something even in a momentary sleep. She did not relish food. She was carried away by various swinging moods—shyness, joy and agony in different moments. Dharani Devi informed her husband about this strange condition. The king was also at a loss to guess the cause of daughter's condition. He called Brihaspati, informed him about this and asked for the reason. Thinking for a while, Brihaspati said, "Hey King! Your daughter saw a man when she had gone to the garden for collecting the flowers and has been subject to mental aberration. Nothing to fear about it. Send your priests to the Agastya's hermitage on the banks of Swarnamukhi river and let the Almighty be anointed with a thousand pots at the hands of Agastya. May it augur well for your daughter." Saying this, the preceptor of the angels left. The people who came to know about this felt perturbed. Immediately Akasha Raju called and informed his priests, Vedic scholars and experts of ordained texts about the preceptor's advice and sent them to Agastya's hermitage to execute the task peacefully. The retinue went to the hermitage along with the maids and the necessary ingredients. Padmavati accompanied them.

Padmavati already restricted the maids not to tell anybody about her meeting with the stranger and hence they almost forgot about it.

As per the desire of the king, Sage Agastya commenced the anointing ceremony at an auspicious

moment for Parameshwara as destised by him. Vedic scholars, experts in Agamas, and priests were performing the task with diligence. The residents of the hermitage were providing the necessary facilities to them. The anointing ceremony was going on. There was a hullabaloo in the cottage. The maids of Padmavati who brought the necessary ingredients for the worship gathered in the nearby garden for rest.

In order to fulfil the desire of Srinivasa, Vakulamma got down the Venkatachalam hill. Finding some tumult to the south of Suvarnamukhi river, she entered the garden in which Padmavati's maids were resting. To her enquiry, they told her about their story. They let her know the condition of Padmavati and how they came for the anointment ceremony of Lord Shiva. Vakulamma expressed her desire to visit Dharani Devi. They agreed to take her along with them to Narayanapuram after the worship.

16. The Lord as a Fortune-Teller

Before Vakulamma reached Narayanapuram, Narayana wanted to achieve his intention in the guise of a woman fortune-teller. He turned a fortune-teller woman daubing turmeric paste on the face. She wore a saffron-coloured bindi on her forehead. Dressed in a red saree, she adorned herself with liquorice seeds, anklet bells, shells, bangles and decked flowers in her chignon. She tied a child on her back with the end of her saree. There were some grains in

her basket marked with turmeric and saffron. A square slate attached with shells worshipped with turmeric and saffron was kept in the basket. She held a bamboo stick in her hand and the basket on her head. Chewing betel leaves and nuts, she wandered about the streets of Narayanapuram shouting, “Fortune-telling! Fortune-telling! I’ll tell in detail about the past, present and future!”

The women of the town saw her and felt that the queen might enquire with her about her daughter. They went to the inner chamber to meet Dharani Devi and suggested that she could call the fortune-telling woman to know about the condition of her daughter. Immediately the queen sent for the fortune-telling woman. The servant-maids went and brought her to the royal palace. But the woman said, “No, I won’t come to the royal palace. Do you want me to be thrown out witnessing my rags, my poverty and my lean and lanky child languishing without food? I’m sorry. I won’t come!” The maids informed the same to the queen. As the queen was in a hurry to know about her daughter’s fate, she went to the doorstep and invited the fortune-teller, “O Fortune-telling woman! Come here. Don’t be afraid. I’ll give you nice gifts if you tell me what’s there in my mind. Come!” She took her inside and asked her to be seated. But the woman denied the seat and sat on the floor itself. She said, “O Mistress! You bathe and dress yourself in a silk saree and jacket, adorn yourself with turmeric, saffron, sandal and

ornaments, bow down to your family-God and come back. I'll reveal what is lurking in your mind correctly!" The queen complied with her advice and came back. The fortune-teller asked her to give presents (Vaayanam) to her family-Goddess. The queen sent the maids to get pearls in a golden winnowing basket (cheta) besides new jacket, betel leaves with spices like cloves, cardamom, etc., turmeric, saffron, sandal, flowers and fruits and kept before her. The woman dragged them to her side and said, "What? There's no money in it!" The queen added a handful of gold coins. The woman asked the queen to sit on a golden pedestal. She then said, "Alas! My child is hungry. Give him some food, O Mother!" As per the orders of the queen, the maids instantly brought some milk-rice in a golden bowl for the child. When the child refused to eat it, the woman beat him angrily, ate the food herself, sent for water and drank it, washed her hands and looking at the queen gracefully commenced her fortune-telling chewing betel leaves and nuts, "O Lady! I'll tell you the fortune very well. I'll reveal the desire in your mind. Hear me! Nara Narayana is my husband. This child is his. He asked me to go to your town and I'm here. You've pleased me very well. I won't lie. My words won't go wrong. I'll tell you how you get relieved of your trouble in the mind!" Dharani Devi was pleased with these words. The fortune-teller asked the queen to sit facing the east and she herself sat facing the north very near to

the queen. She kept the presents on her basket; on it she placed the square slate and the bamboo stick. She worshipped the shells on the slate with turmeric, saffron and flowers and started her *sode* (fortune-telling) as follows:

Fortune-teller: Hey Madhura Minakshi! Mother Kanchi Kamakshi! Hey Kashi Vishalakshi! Three crores of gods and goddesses! Hey Ganapayya! I'll first worship you! Be happy and see that no obstacles come in the way! Make my words true! Hey gods! Reveal what's there in the mind of the royal lady! O Kalasti Gyanamma! Through my words, O Kanakadurgamma! speak the truth and attest my words of fortune-telling! (Saluting) O Lady! There's an intricate problem in your mind! You're worried about relief from this. You're anxious about its consequences. If I show the chin, think it's your son; if I show the left ear, think it's your daughter. The daughter is the cause of your worry! She's very much agitated. It's neither sickness, nor a devil's work. Nor is it an impish prank! For your daughter! A black man with vertical caste-marks on his forehead appeared to your daughter the day before yesterday. She fell for him!

Queen : Who's that man?

Fortune-teller: He's the Lord who rules all the worlds. He descended from heaven only for your daughter!

Queen : Where does he reside? What're his attributes?

Fortune-teller: Not in a single location, but everywhere he is! He is quite near you for your daughter. Know that the sattva guna is the best of the three gunas!

Queen : Near me? Where?

Fortune-teller: Don't think here and there. He's everywhere. At present he's in the middle of that hill to the north for the sake of your daughter, O Mother!

Queen : How can I trust your words to be true?

Fortune-teller: Ask the maids about the tussle that occurred in the garden! They'll tell you the truth! Tomorrow or the day after comes an old woman like my mother to you to discuss the proposal of marriage!

Queen : Do you want me to marry her to an anonymous person whose caste and lineage aren't known?

Fortune-teller: Your daughter is born to be the wife of that person only. None, not even Brahma, can alter it, O Mother! The Lord who is longed by the three worlds with vertical marks on his forehead will be your son-in-law.

Queen : What if she is not married to him?

Fortune-teller : What? What do you say? It's a mistake. Your daughter is born to marry him. If not, you'll lose her.

Queen : (angrily) What's that inappropriate talk?

Fortune-teller : Alas! It's not inappropriate talk. It's true by all means. Ask your daughter and know the truth. My word is inevitable. Hurry up your king to perform the marriage. The marriage will take place auspiciously. Your daughter will be a companion to Lakshmi. Don't avoid the fortune that knocks at your door! Decide to give your daughter in marriage to that Lord of vertical marks. Take a vow. No illness attaches her.

Queen : If the old woman comes to us to discuss the marriage as you said, I'll see.

Fortune-teller : What's there to see? Promise to offer her hand.

Queen : If the issue of the old woman is true, I'll offer my daughter to the Lord of vertical marks on the forehead.

Fortune-teller : It augurs well for you. Your word will be fulfilled. Madhura Minakshamma! Kanchi Kamakshamma! Kashi Vishalakshamma will help you. The

angels will be the elders for the marriage. Trust me! My mother will come just now!

Dharani Devi said, “Ok. Let her come!” and went inside the palace. The Fortune-teller kept the presents in her basket and left with her son.

Vakulamma’s Meeting with Dharani Devi

The queen reached the chamber of Padmavati. The lady was lying in bed without any vigour. The maids were serving her. The queen sat down on her bed and asked, “Dear daughter! Have you seen a person in the garden and fallen in love with him?” The maids then recalled the entire episode and started telling her. The queen could infer from Padmavati’s cheerful complexion the veracity of fortune-teller’s words. She thought of the Lord of vertical marks in her mind and tied a present as a vow. In a moment Padmavati felt relieved of her burden. Her health was restored and she sat down on the bed cheerfully. The mother’s joy knew no bounds. She embraced and fondled her. In the meanwhile, she came to know through her maids that Vakulamma came to meet her along with the maids who returned from the worship of Parameshwara at Agastya’s hermitage. She ordered them to get her into her chamber. She went into her chamber and waited for her.

The maids brought Vakulamma into the queen’s chamber. Dharani Devi thought that the fortune-teller’s words were getting proved. So, she

welcomed her and seated her duly and after friendly enquiries about the health, she enquired about the purpose of her visit. Vakulamma said, "I've come to ask the hand of Padmavati for Venkatachalapati." Dharani Devi was pleased in her heart to hear the proposal, but asked, "does anyone marry one's daughter without knowing the caste and lineage of the bridegroom?" To this Vakulamma described about Venkatachalapati as follows: "Mother! The parents of Venkatachalapati are Devaki and Vasudeva. He belongs to the Lunar dynasty and Vashishtha's lineage. His birth-star is Shravana. He is in the prime of his youth. His earlier name was Sri Krishna. Since he is a resident of Venkatachalam, he came to be known as Venkatachalapati. It appears as though all the auspicious virtues have taken refuge in him. Earlier he had Sri with him. Isn't it said that Sri is known to move hither and thither? But he had nityasri on his chest. It isn't exaggeration to say that there's none in the three worlds wiser, wealthier, more virtuous and handsome than him. I've come to you thinking that he's worthy of your match. I've come with the proposal of marriage, because he has been enamoured by your daughter and grief-stricken ever since he had seen her in the garden the day before yesterday. He treats me like his mother. If you offer your daughter to our Venkatachalapati, you'll be eligible for worship in the three worlds."

Dharani Devi was quite happy with her words. She asked her son Vasunayaka to escort the king to

her place. She took her husband to another room and said, “Hey husband! In the morning I had my fortune read by a fortune-teller. Whatever she said comes out to be true. I’ve set aside a vow tied in a piece of cloth as told by the fortune-teller. Instantly, Padma recovered completely. The fortune-teller also told me that Padmavati had seen a youth in the garden, resolved to marry none other than him; but unable to reveal it to us out of fear, she suffered agony on her own. On enquiry with the maids, I came to know that it was true. Padmavati too affirmed it silently. Vakulamma also told that the person was Venkatachalapati who lived in Venkatachalam; that he belonged to Lunar dynasty and Vashishtha’s lineage; that none could compete with him in form, age and attributes; that he would be a befitting match to Padmavati and that he’ll match us in terms of dynasty, lineage and civility. Describing Venkatachalapati as a black man with vertical marks on his forehead (Namalayya), the fortune-teller warned that if we did not marry her to him, she would part with her life. All this seems to be divine dispensation. As soon as I pledged the vow meditating upon God, she was restored to complete health. Come, Let’s see!” Thus saying, she took Akasha Raju to Padmavati’s chamber. Padmavati cheerfully welcomed her father and embraced him. Akasha Raju thought that whatever his wife told was for their welfare by God’s grace and consoled her saying, “My Dear! Whom did you desire as your

husband?” She remained silent out of shyness. The king said, “Mother! We’re blessed. Without any search for the groom, the destiny has made him available to us. I’ll marry you to the person whom you desired. Be happy!” From there he went to the court and met with the ministers, priests, relatives, friends and prominent citizens and informed them about his proposal of his daughter’s marriage with Venkatachalapati. All of them endorsed the proposal unanimously with great delight.

18. Muhurtam for the Marriage of Padmavati and Srinivasa

Akasha Raju sent his son Vasunayaka and brother Tondaman to fetch Brihaspati and Sage Shuka respectively. Vasunayaka went to the heaven and gave his father’s message to Brihaspati. Immediately, the preceptor of the angels saw the entire episode with his clairvoyance and followed him considering it a divine mission.

Sage Shuka used to live in the hermitage named Shuka Tirtha, which lies to the west of southern Kailasa mountains towards the east of Suvarnamukhi river. Tondaman went to his hermitage and conveyed his brother’s invitation to him. The sage also learnt the matter with his clairvoyance and set out for Narayanapuram along with Tondaman on the chariot.

(This Shuka Tirtha is well-known for a long time. It is a divine tirtha near the western mountains and the southern Kailasa mountains. Now it is in the

control of a farmer. It is within a kilometre to the south of Ishwara temple and to the south of the hill-way to the Bharadwaja tirtha. There is a mango grove in it. This Shuka Tirtha is still there among the Tirthams of Kalahasti. Now it is in the form of a small well.)

Brihaspati reached Narayanapuram first. Akasha Raju welcomed him with great reverence into his inner chamber, enquired about his health and seated him on a deserving seat. He informed the preceptor of the angels about his intention to perform the marriage of his daughter Padmavati and Venkatachalapati and that a virtuous woman came to him for that purpose. Hearing the words of the king, Brihaspati said, “Hey king! Venkatachalapati himself is the Lord of Vaikuntha. Sage Shuka might be knowing about Venkatachalapati of this world. It is better to ask him.” As they were conversing like that, Sage Shuka entered the chamber along with Tondaman. The king received him reverentially and seated him on a befitting seat and informed him about the marriage of Padmavati and Venkatachalapati. Listening to him, Sage Shuka said, “Hey King! You’re blessed to perform this marriage destined by divine will. It’s your past merit that is going to get you the Lord of Vaikuntha himself as your son-in-law. Without any hesitation, follow the wise-saying, “Be quick in taking up the auspicious task.” The preceptor of the angels will also support my advice.” Hearing this, Brihaspati said that he would endorse

the idea of Sri Shuka and asked for the next programme.

Akasha Raju said, “If elders like you order, don’t I oblige? You may fix the auspicious muhurtam for the marriage of the couple as well.” Brihaspati checked the twenty koota vargas as per the birth stars of the bride and bridegroom and their family and lineage, and fixed an unblemished auspicious pushkaramsha sumoohartam that has the strength of the star and the Moon alongwith the lunar day (tithi), the day of the week (vara), the sign in which the moon is (nakshatra), the conjunction of the planetes (yoga) and the horoscope (karanam) calculating the best planetary position. As per the orders of the elders, Akasha Raju handed over to Sage Shuka the finalised marriage card of Padmavati and Venkateshwara along with a letter and sent him to Venkatachalam. The king thanked Brihaspati very much and asked him to conduct the marriage. Brihaspati gave his consent and left for the heaven.

As soon as Akasha Raju agreed to the proposal of the marriage, Vakulamma took leave of Dharani Devi and reached Tirumala. She informed anxious Venkatachalapati the intention of Padmavati and the decision of her parents and blessed him, “May you be married at the earliest.” Srinivasa’s face broadened with smile and complete joy. Vakulamma was also overjoyed and tears of joy swelled in her eyes.

19. Sage Shuka Hands Over the Marriage Card to Venkatachalapati

Sage Shuka crossed the Seven Hills and went to the anthill building of Srinivasa under the tamarind tree along with the marriage card and letter. He prostrated before the Lord. The Lord lifted him with his arms with great regard and embraced him. He seated him duly. After initial enquiries, the sage explained in detail the purpose of his visit and gave the muhurtam paper and the king's letter. He said, "Akasha Raju will be waiting for your reply." Srinivasa read the letter again and again with wide eyes. He said in ecstasy, "The intentions of sages will yield instant results. With the cooperation of elders like you, I've taken up the task of protecting the earth. I've great affection for those enriched with penance. I obey their orders."

"Akasha Raju is the son of Sudharma. He is an ardent follower of dharma and very virtuous. He rules the people not like a sovereign emperor but like a representative of people working for their welfare. Out of his past merit, he obtained Padmavati as his daughter. I'm happy that he decided to marry her to me. It's my duty to reply to him duly," said he and wrote a reply with full decorum befitting a future king that he had agreed to marry Padmavati and would come to Narayanapuram in time for the fixed muhurtam along with the relatives, friends and companions. He informed Vakulamma that the muhurtam was on the Thursday, the tenth lunar day

of the waxing Moon in Vaishakha month at night in the thirteenth ghadiya. She also felt quite happy. He eulogised Sage Shuka in different ways. He gave the reply to him to be handed over to the king. Sage Shuka also praised Srinivasa for his success in his effort and felt blessed for mediating the marriage of the Lord of the Universe. In the meanwhile, Vakulamma gave them good fruits and honey as light refreshment. They ate them happily. Sage Shuka took leave of them and visited Varaha Swami along with Srinivasa and informed him about the marriage of Venkatachalapati. He also felt very happy. The sage took leave of both of them and left for Narayanapuram.

Sage Shuka gave the letter to Akasha Raju and revealed the success of his task. Akasha Raju read the letter as tears of joy swelled in his eyes. He thanked and saluted the sage in a choked voice. Having learnt the programme to be taken up, he appointed those who could execute it completely. He appointed his brother Tondaman and son Vasunayaka to supervise the accommodation and other facilities for the visiting bridegroom party. He prayed to the priests and Vedic scholars to conduct the marriage duly who in turn agreed to it.

The king prayed to Sage Shuka also to stay back in Narayanapuram itself and give him appropriate advice from time to time for the success of the marriage. The sage agreed to his request and stayed back.

20. Srinivasa's Invitation to Gods and Sages

After seeing off Sage Shuka and having consultations with Vakulamma and Varaha Swami, he decided to send invitations to his relatives, well-wishers and sages for the marriage. So, he wrote letters to them personally, gave them to his confidants Garuda and Shesha, informed them about his marriage to their delight and said, "Hey Garuda! Go to Satyaloka and Tapoloka, and give these letters of invitation to Brahma and the sages enriched by penance. Adi Shesha! Go to Kailasa and Nagaloka and extend the invitation to Shankara and Vasuki." He sent special messengers to invite Devendra, Brihaspati and demigods of directions.

Garuda went to Satyaloka first. There was recital of Four Vedas everywhere with appropriate tonal variations providing a feast for the ears. Garuda waited at some place listening to it in ecstasy and after some time he stopped at the doorstep and informed Brahma Deva about his arrival through the guardians. Brahma asked them to let Garuda in instantly and the servant did it accordingly. Seeing Brahma along with Saraswati, Garuda prostrated before them. Brahma blessed him and inquired after him. Garuda gave him Venkatachalapati's invitation to him and waited. Brahma read the letter happily, gave it to Saraswati and sent Garuda off duly felicitating him. Later Brahma called his servants, gave them the marriage card and asked them to announce that all the residents of Satyaloka should

attend the marriage of Srinivasa of Venkatachalam in the Southern India one day in advance for the muhurtam. The emissaries happily announced the same in the Satyaloka.

After leaving Brahmaloaka, Garuda went to Tapoloka and gave the invitation to the sages for the marriage. The sages read the invitations, touched them to their eyes with due regard, and decided to go to the marriage of Srinivasa on the earth.

Shesha went first to Kailasa, visited Parvati and Parameshwara, and gave them the wedding card. The couple read it and happily decided to attend Venkatachalapati's marriage along with family and companions. They informed it to Bhrungi and Nandishwara for making necessary travel arrangements. Later Shesha went to the nether world, gave the invitation cards to Vasuki and other prominent residents of Nagaloka and returned to Venkatachalam. Garuda had already reached it. Both of them were carrying out marriage-related works.

21. Arrival of Brahma and others Gods

As the muhurtam was getting nearer, Brahma along with Saraswati, Savitri, Gayatri set out on his swan to Venkatachalam on the earth. Narada, son of Brahma conceived in his imagination, and other residents of Satyaloka followed them. Learning about the arrival of Brahma through his spies, Venkatachalapati went on Garuda to receive him. Seeing his father, Brahma got off his carriage and

prostrated before him along with his wife. Srinivasa got off Garuda, lifted him with due regard and enquired after him. He interacted with all the invitees and took them to his abode and appointed Garuda to take care of their accommodation.

Srinivasa sat with Brahma. He informed him about the story of past life of Padmavati, daughter of Akasha Raju, how he was going to marry Vedavati now born as Padmavati as promised, and the story of Akasha Raju. Brahma was delighted. Vakulamma too accosted the invitees appropriately. Srinivasa told all of them about the past life of Vakulamma. Everyone treated Vakulamma with due respect and devotion as mother of Vishnudeva. Venkatachalapati involved his own people, who came in advance, for the marriage-related works.

Later, Parameshwara came on Nandi along with Parvati. All the people of Kailasam followed him to witness the marriage of Venkatachalapati. Venkatachalapati received Shiva and Parvati, Vinayaka and Kumaraswami and arranged accommodation for them through Garuda. Then Indra and other demigods of directions, Brihaspati, Moon, Sun and other gods reached Venkatachalam. Later, the Seven Sages and other saints came. All of them were well-accommodated. Venkatachalapati asked Devendra to arrange for construction of an appropriate city through Vishwakarma for the invitees for the marriage. Within no time Vishwakarma constructed a divine city with all the required facilities

as per the orders of Devendra. Later Indra went along with Maya to Narayanapuram as per the orders of Venkateshwara where Akasha Raju worshipped him. He got inns constructed with all facilities at Narayanapuram for the invitees along with friends and relatives. They also constructed kitchens, dining halls, wells and gardens and appointed the attendants to render services.

The pandals and gardens in that town were very attractive providing a feast for the eyes. It is really surprising that none expected that the marriage of the Lord of Vaikuntha would be held on such a grand scale and so wonderfully. Narayanapuram dazzled like a divine city.

At Venkatachalam all the gods, goddesses and saints gathered. On the advice of Venkatachalapati, Brihaspati went to Narayanapuram to conduct the marriage-related activities.

Venkatachalapati entrusted different duties related to the marriage arrangements to different persons. He entrusted the duty of felicitating the angels and saints to the Lord of Parvati; the meals arrangement to Brahma, offering sandal and betel leaves to Manmatha and Kumaraswami, cooking and other activities to Fire-God, water arrangements to Varuna, scents and others to Wind-God, etc. Thus, all the arrangements like bathing and other facilities, meals, lodging, etc. for the invitees were going on mechanically.

Vashishtha informed Srinivasa the programmes to be taken up before the muhurtam like sanctification (punyaham), worship of family-God (ishtakuladevata prarthana), auspicious bath (mangala snanam), etc. Srinivasa expressed his inability to perform them in the absence of Lakshmi. Then with the permission of Srinivasa, Brahma sent the Sun to Karavirapuram to fetch Lakshmi. The Sun-God went on his chariot drawn by seven horses to Karavirapuram and informed Lakshmi about the marriage of Srinivasa and brought her back in his chariot. Srinivasa welcomed her with due regard and asked after her. He informed her that Vedavati was reborn as Padmavati, daughter of Akasha Raju, so that he could fulfil his promise made to her in his incarnation as Rama. Lakshmi too recalled how Vedavati with the help of Fire-God substituted her to suffer the confinement at the hands of Ravana, and consented to the marriage of Srinivasa and Padmavati. She said, “Hey Lord of Vaikuntha and the three worlds! Who can understand your miracles? I think my desertion of Vaikuntha is also for the welfare of the world! I seek your forgiveness.” Srinivasa too took her into his fold and said, “Aren’t we both actors in this universal drama?” Lakshmi felt happy.

Then Brahma informed his mother Lakshmi, “Mother! We have to begin Nandi. Vashishtha ordered to perform auspicious bath to the father.” Collecting all the auspicious ingredients in a plate, Sridevi along with Saraswati, Parvati and others

headed by Arundhati conducted auspicious bath to Srinivasa as the trumpets were blowing. After the bath, Srinivasa wore golden garments and sat down on the special pedestal on the banks of Swami Pushkarini. He painted vertical sectarian marks on his forehead and adorned himself with the divine ornaments given by Kubera. He performed matins and saluted Kashyapa, Agastya, Vashishtha and other sages who in turn blessed him, “May you be married at the earliest!” to which the angels and saints happily said, “Amen!” With the permission of the elders, Vashishtha completed sanctification ceremony (punyaha karma) preceded by inaugural ceremony (nandi) and declaration of purpose (sankalpa) by seating Srinivasa on a specially arranged pedestal of pearls. Thus, Vashishtha made Srinivasa take up the ordained Vedic tasks.

Then they took all the necessary material for worship and followed Srinivasa to Kumaradhara Tirtham amidst auspicious music. Srinivasa worshipped the Shami tree lighting the lamp, offering incense, oblation and waving camphor light. A shami twig was cut and taken to Swami Pushkarini and was erected near the abode of Varaha Swami. Thus, the nandi programme was completed under the auspices of Vashishtha.

22. Kubera’s Loan

Later, Srinivasa asked Brahma to send all the invitees to Narayanapuram for the marriage. But

Brahma replied that the elders suggested that after the Punyahakarma they were not supposed to go to the bride's house without taking meals and so the meals have to be arranged. Venkatachalapati said that he had no money with him for buying the required provisions. Hearing this, Shankara said, "Srinivasa! You shouldn't say that. An auspicious programme once begun should not be stopped in the middle. Haven't you heard that one has to perform marriage even by taking loan." Srinivasa then called Kubera and took him behind the peepul tree along with Brahma and Shankara and said, "Kubera! There's a need to perform my marriage in this Kali Yuga. I'll be incarnating as per the conditions prevailing in the Yuga, times and country. Hence, give me loan for my marriage as per the terms and conditions of this Yuga. I'll repay your loan as per the Yuga dharma." Kubera said, "Ok. I'll give you the loan if you give me a promissory note as per this Yuga dharma." Venkatachalapati agreed to it and wrote the promissory note as follows:

"My marriage with Padmavati is fixed by the elders for the tenth day of waxing Moon in the month of Vaishakha of year Vilambi. I have taken a loan of gold coins with the imprint of Sri Rama on them to the tune of fourteen-digit number. As per the prevailing conditions of the Yuga, time and clime, I agree to repay the loan at the monthly interest rate of one Sri Rama gold coin per a hundred Sri Rama gold coins from the vows (mudupulu) pledged to

me by the devotees. This promissory note is written by me to this effect.

Witnesses

Yours,

Brahma

Sri Venkatachalapati

Maheshwara

Tirumala”

Ashwattha (Peepul) Tree

Kubera took the Promissory Note and gave the loan. Immediately, Venkatachalapati appointed Kubera himself to procure with that money all the necessary provisions and other requirements like jaggery, sugar, ghee, milk, curd, meal plates, vegetables, etc besides white robes, mangalyas and other ornaments, betel leaves and nuts, cardamom, cloves, camphor and other spices. As per the orders of Venkatachalapati, the Fire-God prepared rice, vegetables and sweetmeats, soups and syrups, rice dressed with coloured condiments and curries. He asked the Lord to invite the guests for meals as they are ready. Then all the angels, saints and others right from Pandava Tirtham to Srishailam came and sat down in rows. The five kinds of edible meals were first offered as oblation to Nrusimha Swami as per the order of Srinivasa. As per the saying, “Meals served fully on the leaf-plate”, very big banana leaves were laid before them and all the food items were served within minutes. They did auposanam (encircling the meals with mantric water) before taking the meals. Venkatachalapati begged their forgiveness for the delay in arranging the meals and humbly requested them to eat to the full with

whatever little items served and fulfil his desire. All of them replied, “Hey Sri Venkateshwara! The meals served by you are like ambrosia. This meal is a means of liberation for us. We are blessed and feel fulfilled.” They ate the meals satisfactorily. After the meals, Kubera gave them betel packs, sandal and honorarium. Sri Venkatachalapati, Lakshmi, Brahma, Manmatha and Vakulamma took meals at the end. It was already night time then. Gradually, the night receded.

23. Venkatachalapati Leaves for Narayanapuram

The sumuhurtam for the marriage of Venkateshwara and Padmavati was at night. The city was well-adorned and shone forth beautifully by the morning itself. The citizens cleaned their residences and surroundings and adorned them with flour drawings, green festoons, turmeric and red powder and floral porches. Banana trunks were erected and garlands were hung around them adding to the splendour of different colours.

At the instance of Tondaman, Maya constructed thousand-pillared marriage hall with a four-pillared pedestal for the marriage in the middle with the nine gems and hanging pearl garlands. The entire marriage hall was made to shine with gems and gold. There was good seating arrangement for the angels, saints, priests and other people. The virtuous women were allocated due place. Even without lamps, the night appeared like a blazing day with divine light. The

marriage party, that had slept earlier night in the buildings constructed by Maya, got up early in the morning, finished their morning chores, bathed in Swami Pushkarini, performed Vedic duties, took light refreshments and followed Venkatachalapati to Narayanapuram.

At Narayanapuram, Sage Shuka alerted Vasunayaka and Tondaman about the marriage-preparations as ordained by Brihaspati, and waited at Padmasarovaram with the permission of Akasha Raju to receive Sri Venkatachalapati. The marriage party came by different means of transport like chariots, elephants, horses, palanquins, and some on foot. Venkatachalapati was on Garuda in the forefront followed by Vakulamma, Lakshmi, Manmatha, Brahma and others. The other angels, saints and retinue were behind them. There were musical instruments like kettledrums, double drums and drums, singers like Narada, Tumburu and others, dancers like Rambha and others, kinneras, kimpurushas and Gandharvas leading the procession with great enthusiasm.

Having seen the Lord of Garuda, Sage Shuka was overwhelmed with ecstasy and prostrated before him. Seeing the sage, the Lord got off Garuda, raised him and took him into his fold with great regard. Sage Shuka praised the Lord in different ways and invited them all to his hermitage for his hospitality. Venkatachalapati was about to tell that he would be delayed in his travel, when Vakulamma said, “Hey

son! It's our duty to accept the invitation of the mediator for the marriage." So, he stopped at Shuka's hermitage along with his retinue. Happily, Shuka gave hospitality to Srinivasa with tubers and roots he procured. Due to the miracle of Venkatachalapati, all the angels and others belched as though they ate to the full. They felt they had tasted the sage's hospitality and praised him. From there the Lord set out along with Sage Shuka to Narayanapuram. Others followed suit.

24. Akasha Raju Receiving Sri Venkatachalapati

The auspicious music was being played at the royal palace of Narayanapuram. The virtuous women conducted auspicious bath to Padmavati singing the keertanas pertaining to the marriages of Lakshmi and Gouri. They dressed her in silk saree and jacket, cleared the tangles of hair, plaited it and adorned it with flowers. The maids adorned her with the golden jewellery given by her mother. The elderly married women kept the bindi (kumkuma) on her forehead. They made Padmavati worship the family-gods, offer refreshments, sandal and betel leaves and wave camphor light. Later, they helped Padmavati worship the elderly married women among the relations, civilians and wives of the priests with new clothes, turmeric, red pigment and gems. Thus, they made her receive the blessings of married women.

Later, they worshipped Srimannarayana with sixteen types of services, ambrosial offerings and

waving lighted camphor and made the bride bow down to the Lord. The parents, priests, relatives, Brihaspati and other prominent people blessed her, “May you enjoy a long, married life and rule the people like your own children!” Later they ate their favourite dishes satisfactorily. Vasunayaka offered sandal, betel leaves and honorarium to all. Later, Akasha Raju, his wife and daughters, brother and family men had meals.

That evening Akasha Raju came to know through the messengers in advance about the advent of Sri Venkatachalapati along with his friends, relatives and retinue. He asked Dharani Devi to decorate Padmavati. Afterwards, he set out with the bride and his family, priests and retinue and auspicious music to receive Venkatachalapati with new clothes, ornaments, garlands, sandal and other fragrant ingredients, betel leaves with nuts, fruits, sweet drinks as the elderly married women, women of inner chamber and maids proceed led by a well-adorned elephant resembling airavata. As soon as Venkatachalapati saw Akasha Raju, he got off Garuda. Akasha Raju too got off the chariot and along with his daughter, son and wife welcomed Srinivasa saying, “Hey Sri Venkateshwara! My desire is fulfilled. I’m blessed. My life has come to fruition.” He worshipped Srinivasa offering new clothes, ornaments, sandal, garlands and sweet drink. He asked after and welcomed everyone. He took a procession with Venkatachalapati on an elephant and

Padmavati on a palanquin accompanied by auspicious music, dance, fun and frolic through the streets of Narayanapuram. As they were reaching the specially-constructed divine palace, the married women showered fragrant flowers on them. At the entrance of the palace, Tondaman's wife waved lighted camphor to Venkateshwara. Tondaman waved a coconut around the bridegroom and broke it to ward off the evil eye. While the auspicious music was being played, Venkatachalapati entered the palace placing his right foot first. All the visitors relaxed in the Guest houses shown by Tondaman.

Venkatachalapati called Kubera and said, "Kubera! Go now to Akasha Raju and tell him that it's better if the meals are arranged before the muhurtam which is at the thirteenth ghadia of the night." Kubera told Akasha Raju accordingly. Immediately, Akasha Raju got the meals served for all the angels, saints and brahmins and felicitated them with betel leaves, sandal and honorarium.

25. Marriage of Padmavati and Venkateshwara

It was the tenth day of waxing Moon in the month of Vaishakha. As the auspicious hour was fast approaching, Akasha Raju called his brother and son and ordered them to arrange for honouring the bridegroom (Vara Pooja). They said that all the required items were kept ready. As Brihaspati and Sage Shuka were heading forward, Akasha Raju set out with the royal men and women of the palace, all

the relatives, friends, and companions. The servants were ready with the articles like new clothes, ornaments, sandal, garlands, fruits and betel leaves in the baskets. The mahout brought a well-adorned elephant. The flatterers, priests and citizens set out for the event. The burning torches and lanterns turned the night into a midday. Akasha Raju started with the gathering to the venue of Venkatachalapati. They arrived at the venue at a gentle pace along with different auspicious musical instruments. Well-adorned Venkatachalapati was sitting in the middle of the palace on a pearl-decked seat on the pedestal. Around him were Brahma and other gods, saints like Vashishtha and angels including siddhas, saadhyas seated in the court. Venkatachalapati in the middle appeared like a Full Moon. Seeing his father-in-law, Venkatachalapati got up from the seat and went to receive him with salutation, embraced him and said, “Why’ve you taken this trouble at your age? You ought to have sent this young man!” pointing to Vasudhana with a smile. Akasha Raju felt his life fulfilled with the embrace of Venkatachalapati.

Vashishtha ordered Akasha Raju to felicitate the bridegroom. Akasha Raju informed the same to his wife Dharani Devi. Led by Arundhati Devi, the married women were singing the bridal songs; beautiful auspicious music was being played as a feast to the ears. Dharani Devi gave new clothes and ornaments to Venkatachalapati seated on the pearl-

decked pedestal, garlanded him, daubed sandal on his body and offered the betel leaves to the hand. As the sight of Srinivasa provided a feast for her eyes, she felt fulfilled in her life

Having seen Venkatachalapati at that time, Brihaspati, Vashishtha and other saints, all the angels, priests and citizens, courtiers felt ecstatic that they had seen the Lord of Vaikuntha himself.

The priests hurried the king that the muhurtam was fast approaching. Akasha Raju escorted Sri Venkateshwara to the royal elephant. All the invitees accompanied him. The Lord mounted the elephant. The citizens watched him as if he were the Devendra of the earth. The elephant was walking at a gentle pace. Before it, the dancers were dancing; there was music ahead of it; it was preceded by auspicious music of trumpets. As the elephant was moving slowly in the streets of Narayanapuram to the marriage hall, the women from different houses waved lighted camphor before the Lord. Fireworks were blasted in the streets. There was fun and frolic everywhere. The sages were reciting the Vedic hymns. The priests were chanting the hymns pertaining to the marriage. The married women were singing the bridal songs. The elephant slowly reached the venue as if it were exhibiting the pace of marriage procession. The Lord got off the elephant and waited there. Tondaman's wife waved lighted camphor along with other women before the Lord. Vasudhana held the hand of his brother-in-law and escorted him to

the pearl-decked seat of the marriage pandal. The priests were chanting benedictory hymns. The auspicious music was being played well.

Brahma and other angels, Indra and other demigods of directions, Narada, Tumburu and other singers, prominent Gandharvas, Kinneras, Kimpurushas, Nagas were seated well. All the sages sat near the marriage pandal along with Vashishta and Brihaspati.

The priests kept the holy water from Swami Pushkarini in golden vessels ready on the pedestal. Vashishtha conducted the necessary worshipful rites for commencing the muhurtam. The required articles, milk, ghee and sacrificial firewood were procured. Silver standing lamps were shining with divine light on either side of the pandal. Reciting the marital hymns, Vashishtha and Brihaspati commenced the programme. The priests recited the sankalpa. Vashishtha gave the bridal dress (madhuparkas) to Venkatachalapati. Dharani Devi filled the holy water from Swami Pushkarini in golden vessels. Vashishtha was reciting the Vedas. Venkatachalapati kept both his feet in the golden plate. As Dharani Devi was pouring the holy water from the golden vessels, Akasha Raju washed the feet of Venkatachalapati and sprinkled the water on himself, on his wife, son and brother and felt sanctified. As Vashishtha was reciting the hymns, Akasha Raju washed the feet of Venkatachalapati, worshipped them with sandal, kumkuma, flowers and turmeric rice, waved lighted

camphor and got ready for offering his well-adorned daughter in marriage to the Lord at the time of muhurtam.

The married women plaited the hair of Padmavati with golden tassels, fixed it with an ornament bedecked with swan figures, decorated with flowers, pearl-bedecked ear hangings and a pendant for the parting of the hair. They dressed her in silk saree and jacket, adorned her with different ornaments, a black collyrium dot on the cheeks, red bindi on the forehead, red dye to the feet and such other bridal beautification measures and got her ready as a bride. Arundhati Devi and other virtuous women seated the bride towards the right side of Venkatachalapati on gem-bedecked seat, singing the bridal songs. Before the kanyaadaanam, Akasha Raju gave crores of golden coins as a gift to the bridegroom. In addition, he presented a rare golden crown, many invaluable diamond necklaces, ear-drops studded with nine kinds of precious stones, shoulder-ornaments, diamond-studded golden rings for ten fingers, and bejewelled golden covering for the hand on the waist (katihasta), bejewelled golden footwear, innumerable silver utensils, etc. along with innumerable elephants, horses, cows to the son-in-law as gifts as per the royal formality. As Vashishtha and Brihaspati were reciting the mantras thoroughly, the king gave well-adorned Padmavati in marriage to Srinivasa with the holy water of Swami Pushkarini. Vashishtha tied the sanctified thread (kankana) to Venkatachalapati and made him tie another one to

Padmavati. Then, Brihaspati mentioned the lineage (pravara) of the bride thus: “Hey Srinivasa! Sri Venkatesha! Padmavati belongs to Atri gotra (lineage). She is the great granddaughter of King Suvira, granddaughter of King Sudharma, daughter of Akasha Raju. Akasha Raju gives this daughter of his to you as wife and better-half to be a partner of all dharmic duties in marriage to you. Please accept!” Akasha Raju was extremely happy to hear these words and gave Sri Venkateshwara golden and bejewelled ornaments. Later, Vashishtha mentioned the lineage (pravara) of the bridegroom thus: “Sri Venkateshwara belongs to Vashishtha gotra. He is the great grandson of Yayati, grandson of Shoora, son of Vasudeva. He is accepting the daughter of Akasha Raju belonging to Atri gotra as his wife and better-half.” As the trumpets were blowing and auspicious music was being played, Akasha Raju took the holy water from the hand of Dharani Devi and poured it into the right hand of Venkatachalapati and completed the rite of kanyadana.

As the married women like Arundhati were singing the keertanas, Vashishtha and other priests were reciting the hymns related to tying the marital knot (mangalyadharana), Sri Venkatachalapati tied the holy wedding-knots around the neck of Padmavati. All the angels, sages and the gathered elders showered the turmeric rice grains on the newly wedded couple and blessed. Vashishtha conducted the laaja homa thrice through the hands of Vasudhana

to Padmavati's hands, and through the hands of Padmavati to Srinivasa. Later, Vaikhanasa priest got Padmavati and Srinivasa perform the rest of the marital rites thoroughly.

Later, Akasha Raju gave fruits, flowers, sandal, betel leaves and honorarium to all the invitees through his brother. The invitees of the bridal and bridegroom parties, who had been on a fast before the muhurtam, took meals after the marriage along with the priest, bride, bridegroom and their relatives.

The next morning virtuous women helped the bride and bridegroom daub the green gram paste and throw colours on each other. They anointed them. Akasha Raju fed all the invitees and citizens with five varieties of meals to their satisfaction and requested them to stay for four more days. He offered them new varieties of meals every day. On the fifth day, the naakabali and kankana visarjana (removing the protective band) were conducted as usual and new clothes were given to the newly-wed couple seating them on a pearl-decked seats. Thus, the marriage ceremony was conducted for five days providing a feast to the eyes of the visitors. That evening Akasha Raju and Dharani Devi entrusted Padmavati to the care of Sri Venkatachalapati, Vakula Devi and Sri Lakshmi Devi happily singing appaginta (committing to the charge of in-laws) songs. Immediately, the bride and bridegroom were seated on an elephant resembling Indra's airavatam. The relatives and friends were felicitated with due honours

and seen off to the abode of the bridegroom with auspicious music. Akasha Raju felt as if his daughter were the wealth deposited with him by the groom and he was returning the property to the depositor safely with satisfaction.

26. Venkatachalapati at Venkatachalam

After the required stay for three nights, Sri Venkatachalapati mounted on Garuda, went to the in-law's place and sought permission to leave for Venkatachalam. Embracing her daughter, Dharani Devi was unable to utter a single word overwhelmed by joy. Akasha Raju wiped his tears with his upper garment and blessed his daughter and son-in-law. Bowing down to his in-laws and younger in-laws, Tondaman couple, Venkatachalapati took leave of them. He cut some jokes with his brother-in-law and left with his wife, Brahma and other angels and saints for Agastya's hermitage on the banks of Suvarnamukhi river. Sage Agastya asked all of them to stay there for a day and advised Venkateshwara that the newly-wed couple should not ascend the mountain for a period of six months. Venkateshwara got a cottage constructed to the north-east of Kalyani and Swarnamukhi rivers and towards the south-east of Agastya's hermitage. He felicitated all the angels duly to their satisfaction and saw them off. Brihaspati, Vashishtha and Sage Shuka took leave of Venkateshwara and left for their abodes. Lakshmi left for Karavirapuram. The new couple stayed in the cottage for six months. The place where the

newly-wed couple lived is now called Srinivasa Mangapuram and we can find a well-known Kalyana Venkateshwara temple there.

One day before going to Venkatachalam, Venkatachalapati went along with Padmavati to Narayanapuram and informed the in-laws that Vakulamma had gone to Venkatachalam and now they had to go there without any delay. Towards *sare* Akasha Raju presented to his daughter new saree and jacket, granaries of high-quality paddy, varieties of pulses, tamarind, jaggery, sugar, ghee tins, curd pots, metal pots of milk, chillies, mustard seeds and other condiments, pickles, etc., basketfuls of vegetables, tubers, ginger, mint, coriander, lime fruit, variety of fruits, laddoos, vadas, arises and other victuals. All of them were sent in boxes and yokes for the servants to carry. Srinivasa along with Padmavati entered the anthill-building under the tamarind tree on the banks of Swami Pushkarini. Vakulamma lighted camphor and waved before the newly-weds and gave them milk and fruit duly. The *sare* presentations of Akasha Raju also reached them. Srinivasa lived happily with Padmavati in Venkatachalam.

27. Akasha Raju's Demise: Srinivasa's Mediation

One day a royal priest came from Narayanapuram to the abode of Srinivasa and informed that Akasha Raju was on his death-bed. Hearing the news, Padmavati was engulfed in grief.

Srinivasa consoled her and instantly proceeded to the hermitage of Agastya along with Vakulamma, Padmavati and priests. Informing the sage about the sad news, all of them went to Narayanapuram. Padmavati entered the royal palace with a long face, saw the sad state of her father and burst into tears embracing her mother. Vakulamma consoled both of them and took Padmavati into another room.

Sage Agastya went to Akasha Raju and informed him about the arrival of Srinivasa. But Akasha Raju was breathing heavily and his eyes were still closed. Seeing this, Srinivasa cried in a high pitch like an ordinary man, embracing Vasudhana and Tondaman. All of them burst into grief. Then, Akasha Raju opened his eyes slowly. Seeing everyone around, with great difficulty he bowed down to Agastya. Agastya showed Srinivasa to him. Srinivasa approached him. Akasha Raju was not in a position to speak. He beckoned the son and brother and joining their right hands together, he kept them in the right hand of Srinivasa. He said gently, “Hey Purushottama! Lord of Lords! Protect them!” In the meanwhile, Vakulamma, Padmavati and Dharani Devi came there. The king beckoned them nearer, stroked Padmavati’s head gently, gave permission to Dharani Devi for self-immolation on his pyre (sahagamanam). Seeing Srinivasa, Sage Agastya and Vakulamma, he mumbled closing his eyes, “Hey Lord of Vaikuntha! I take refuge in your holy feet!” and breathed his last. Everyone burst into grief. The

priests and ministers arranged for the last rites. The entire city turned gloomy. The citizens went to the royal palace and cried. Vasunayaka was conducting the last rites along with his uncle as per the instructions of the priests. Everyone headed for the cemetery. Dharani Devi accompanied them like an adorned bride among married women with head down. After completing the rites, the priests placed the body of Akasha Raju on the sandalwood pyre. Pots together of ghee were poured on it. Vasunayaka lit the sacrificial fire and the flames rose high. Dharani Devi circumambulated the pyre of her husband three times and entered the fire. Within minutes the flames enveloped them as if the Fire-God were taking both of them to the Vaikuntha. In the meanwhile, a divine carriage came from the heaven and both Akasha Raju and Dharani Devi boarded it. Instantly, it took them to the heaven. After finishing the obsequies, all of them went home. Vasudhana finished the remaining rites with Vashishtha and other sages, priests, relatives and friends and citizens as ordained by the shastra. Thus, Vasudhana and Tondaman conducted the obsequies, extended charity to the sages, Vedic scholars, priests and fed the poor to their satisfaction. After this, Srinivasa along with Vakulamma and Padmavati went home. Vashishtha and other sages, relatives and friends also went back to their respective abodes.

Tondaman was ruling the portion of the kingdom he got from his father as well as the kingdom of his

brother with the latter's approval. After Akasha Raju, there arose differences between him and Vasudhana regarding the movable property as Tondaman wanted to get separated. So, both of them went to Srinivasa for solution. Padmavati too begged him to divide the property in such a way that there would not be any quarrel between her brother and uncle. In the beginning itself, Sage Agastya sensed the ambitions of Vasudhana and Tondaman for kingdom and the consequences and suggested a peaceful treaty between them with the aid of Srinivasa to thrive with mutual cooperation.

Srinivasa discussed with each of them individually, elicited their opinions and asked for their final decision. Both of them expressed their willingness to abide by whatever decision Srinivasa took, as it was the ancient practice to be bound by the decision of the mediator.

Trusting their words, Srinivasa revealed the following suggestions for the treaty to Vasudhana and Tondaman before Agastya.

As per the division of kingdom between Akasha Raju and Tondaman done earlier by their father, Tondaman should get Tondamanadu kingdom, Vasudhana with his descendants should get the share of his father Akasha Raju and rule it with Narayanapuram as its capital.

The movable property earned by Tondaman along with his brother Akasha Raju by assisting him

should be distributed equally. The capital investment, gold, silver, nine kinds of gems, pearls, corals should also be divided into two equal parts. The chariots, elephants, horses and cows should form two equal parts. So is the case with the army as per their strength, valour, wisdom and character. The servant-maids could be appointed as per their choice.

The utensils, implements and other goods should also be divided into two parts and Vasudhan being younger should be given the first choice. Agastya also said that it was the righteous method as per dharma. But Vasudhan gave the privilege first to his uncle in regard to the movable property as he had ruled the undivided kingdom along with his father. Agastya was happy to note the good intentions of young Vasudhan.

Then Tondaman divided the entire movable property into two parts east and west-wise. He wrote two chits, folded them and asked Padmavati to pick them and give to each of them. Srinivasa felt happy about their allegiance to truth, justice and dharma and was smiling. Padmavati mixed and tossed them on the floor. She gave one chit to her uncle and another to her brother Vasudhan. Agastya unfolded those chits and said, “the mother has proved the worldly dharma correctly like an angel of dharma. It is good that the elders stay on the upper rung and the younger ones on the lower rung. Thus, it means that all of us have fulfilled their own duties perfectly.

This treaty is auspicious for Srinivasa. May the people of Kali Yuga divide their father's property thus with a sense of mutual cooperation." Both Tondaman and Vasudhana prostrated before Agastya. They felt happy about the treaty. Both of them gave away sixteen best villages unasked to Padmavati as a gift. Maybe the tradition of gifting land and other property to the female member of the family has come into vogue since then. Thus, the differences between Tondaman and Vasudhana came to an end and the unity prevailed.

Srinivasa first installed Tondaman as the king of Tondamanadu and later anointed Vasudhana as the king of Narayanapuram. He spent a few days both in the houses of brother-in-law and younger father-in-law enjoying their favourable dishes. One fine morning, Srinivasa along with Padmavati and Vakulamma left Narayanapuram for Venkatachalam.

Tondaman was ruling the kingdom with Tondamanadu as the capital in an ideal way. He provided a number of facilities to the people. He constructed a Venkateshwara temple in his fort for inculcating the devotional spirit among the people.

Vasudhana was also ruling the kingdom with Narayanapuram as the capital as per the wishes of the people. The people were loyal to the king with utmost devotion and diligence and earned name for their allegiance.

28. Tondaman's Visit to Srinivasa and Padmavati

After a few days, Emperor Tondaman went to see Srinivasa and Padmavati. Srinivasa and Padmavati welcomed him with great regard and asked after him. After a bath, he was given a meal. Srinivasa seated Tondaman by his side and chewing betel leaves asked the reason for his visit. He replied, "Hey Lord of the world! The experienced people praise you as God, as Purushottama, saviour of the devotees and founder of dharma. With my limited knowledge, I realised it is true. I've come here with a desire to have your divine darshan." Srinivasa was happy to note the king's devotion and said, "Hey King! Your brother Akasha Raju has made me a householder of Venkatachalam. Now, you undertake a great job and get fulfilled."

"Hey Lord! If you order me, I'll do it with devotion and diligence. I trust everything will be fulfilled with your mercy as you're the protector of the entire world."

"I relegate this to you trusting your ability. If you do it, I'll be a complete householder. At present I don't have an abode of my own. Right now, I'm in this anthill underneath the tamarind tree. Hence, to construct an abode is a must for me."

"Hey Lord! If you decide about the place, I'll commence the work instantly."

"Come. Let's see the land where that abode should be built." The Lord took Tondaman along

with Padmavati and Vakulamma to Varaha Swamy and informed him about his desire for an abode. The latter suggested that the place to his south on the banks of Swami Pushkarini is suitable for the construction of the temple. Pointing to the place, Srinivasa said, “There should be a temple here facing the east besides two towers, and three compound walls, seven doors, and a flagstaff. There should be in the temple a royal pavilion, a venue for Sacrifice and cow-sheds. There should also be rooms for granaries and other materials, garlands, different ingredients, camphor and spices, a kitchen to the south-east with all facilities and a well opposite to it as a source of water. The doors of the temple and inner chamber should have gold-plated copper coverings to form golden doorway. There should be a chamber for Garuda in front of me.” Tondaman happily assured that he would execute the orders of the Lord. Srinivasa said, “Since you’d built the tirtha earlier, I entrusted the task to you believing in your ability.”

Tondaman asked, “Hey Lord! Everything is due to your grace. I’m just a nominal figure. None can do anything without your will. Your grace is the cause of everything. But, Hey Lord! Please let me know how I had served the tirthas earlier”. To this, the Lord started telling the story of his past life thus.

29. The Story of Rangadasu

In the past when I was doing penance in the anthill, a sage by name Vaikhanasa, having heard the

story of my Krishna incarnation, wanted to see my form as Krishna and performed great penance. When the penance reached its culmination, Brahma appeared before him, came to know of his desire on enquiry and said, “Now onwards you shouldn’t worship the form of Krishna. In this Kali Yuga, that Sri Krishna is in the form of Venkatachalapati. So, better you worship him and get fulfilled. Go to Venkatachalam right now and worship Venkatachalapati who is in the anthill underneath the tamarind tree towards the south of Swami Pushkarini. On the way to Venkatachalam, you’ll come across a devotee named Rangadasu. He’ll assist you. Venkatachalapati will like your rites of worship. You’ll be delighted to have his divine darshan.” As the devotee was going to Venkatachalam, he came across Rangadasu who accompanied him. Sage Vaikhanasa was immensely happy and became friends with Rangadasu. He went up the Venkatachalam and saw the tamarind tree near Swami Pushkarini and the anthill under it. He observed a divine person in the anthill and saluted him assuming that he was Venkatachalapati. He then told his entire story to Rangadasu. Rangadasu gathered the flowers and fruits from the nearby forest and Sage Vaikhanasa was worshipping me.

“Rangadasu planted flower plants besides sacred basil for gathering flowers required for worship. He used to irrigate them with the holy water of Swami Pushkarini and nurture them well. Thinking

that a well in the garden itself would reduce the trouble of carrying water from a distance, he got a nice well dug. Thus, he nurtured the flower garden with the well-water and also planted fruit trees here and there. There were different fragrant flowers in the garden that appeared never to fade.

“One day, a Gandharva was bathing in the Swami Pushkarini along with his wife. Rangadasu who had gone for fruits and sacred grass saw the couple and was carried away by their dalliance in the water. He was taken in by their elegance and beauty, fun and frolic and lost count of worship time. Sage Vaikhanasa burst into anger at the delay of Rangadasu in getting the flowers and fruits in time. Rangadasu was aghast at the sage’s indignation, realised his mistake and prayed to God in his own mind to forgive him. I felt pity for him and consoled him from the anthill itself by informing him that his mind was distracted due to his own illusion but he was free from the sin due to his realisation and repentance, and as a result of this merit he would die on the banks of Pushkarini to take re-birth as a son of Nagakanya and Chola king and would be known as Tondaman due to the association with the bimba tendrils. You’re the same Rangadasu in the past life.” Thus, he enlightened Tondaman about his past life and continued, “You’re blessed. You grew a flower garden for the sake of Vaikhanasa worship and dug a well for the garden. Thus, you rendered service of providing fruit and

water auspiciously. Hence, you deserve a lot of affection from me.” Hearing these words, Tondaman bowed down to the Lord with great reverence. Tears of joy rolled down his cheeks. He was choked in his voice, but somehow, he recovered and said, “Hey Compassionate Lord! I’ll construct very soon a temple you desired to please you.” He then took leave of Padmavati and Srinivasa and left for Tondamanadu.

As Sage Vaikhanasa worshipped him closely with diligent devotion, the Lord gave him darshan and asked him to continue to worship him in the Vaikhanasa tradition only as he liked it most and satisfied the sage. Even now, the Lord is worshipped in the Vaikhanasa tradition with great attention.

The well dug by Rangadasu is still there in the temple to the north of the flagstaff. At present it is opposite to the kitchen.

30. Tondaman’s Construction of Temple

Emperor Tondaman went back to his kingdom, sent for expert architects and got a blue print prepared by them for the temple construction desired by Srinivasa. He sent it to Srinivasa through his priest. Srinivasa approved the blueprint. Later, Tondaman called for chief sculptors and ordered them to construct the temple as per the blueprint. They in turn employed workers and gathered the construction materials. The foundation stone was laid down on an auspicious moment and the

masonry and stone work commenced. The sculptors carved out large granite slabs, pillars, beams, square stones, door frames, etc. showing off all their skills. The workers commenced the masonry work of the temple and its compound walls from the northeast corner. Tondaman used to inspect the site frequently to enthuse the workers and suggest the necessary modifications. Srinivasa was also supervising. The temple construction was going on with granite at a rapid pace as per the wishes of the Lord. Adorned with the four images of Vishnu, Vainateya, golden vessels and many other images, the construction of small vimana gopuram on the sanctum sanctorum was going on. After some time, the temple was ready with all requirements as per the desire of the Lord. Vakulamma personally supervised and shaped the construction of the kitchen as required. We can see her stone idol in it even now. The Vaikuntha frontyard was ready around the sanctum sanctorum. The vimana gopuram was built on it duly with golden vessels. The golden vimana and golden doorway were ready.

In addition to them, staircase, four-pillared porticoes here and there, a divine tower on the top of Sheshacalam were also constructed. At an auspicious time, Tondaman met Srinivasa, bowed down to him and said, “Hey Lord of the Universe! Protector! As your servant, I am happy to inform you that I have executed your order. Srinivasa was delighted at the humility of Tondaman. He embraced

him and said, “Hey Tondamandala King! You’re one of the important relatives of mine and I’m quite delighted about your humility. You’ve now become my dear relative. I congratulate you wholeheartedly.” Hearing these words, tears of joy swelled in the eyes of Tondaman. It was divine bliss. His complexion revealed that he understood the Vedic dictum, “Anando Brahma!”

Srinivasa called Brihaspati and asked him to fix an auspicious muhurtam for the housewarming ceremony (gruhapravesham). The preceptor of gods fixed a fine muhurtam examining the lunar day (tithi), the day of the week (vara), the ruling star of the day (nakshatra), the conjunction of the planets (yoga) and the horoscopes (karanamu) endowed with Vrushabha kalashacakrshuddhi especially when all the auspicious planets are in a peak state. Invitations were sent for the ceremony to Indra and other demigods of directions, Brahma and other gods, saints and ascetics and other devotees. Brahma was making the necessary preparations. Venkatachalam was shining like the Vaikuntha on the earth. But Srinivasa was not happy and he appeared lacklustre. Seeing his condition, Devendra asked him, “Hey Lord! You seem to be distracted in some thought. Please let me know and use my services.” Srinivasa heaved a long sigh and said, “Nothing, Devendra! My mind is perturbed in different ways about Lakshmi’s absence on this auspicious occasion!” Devendra expressed his readiness to get her here

provided the Lord ordered. The Lord exclaimed, “Do you need my order?”

“My pleasure! I’ll get the mother of the Universe instantly!” He called his charioteer Matali to get the chariot ready, went to Kolhapur and informed Lakshmi about the ceremony. Lakshmi was happy and accompanied Devendra to Venkatadri on Pushpaka Vimana. Srinivasa welcomed her. As Padmavati bowed down to her, she lifted her with both hands and took her into her fold. Vakulamma too was happy to see them. Srinivasa at that time was so graceful that it was even beyond Adi Shesha to describe his elegance.

The temple was wonderfully decorated as the auspicious time for the inauguration was fast approaching. Decorated with the banana trunks, mango leaf festoons, different floral garlands and the brightness of jewellery, the temple was shining with great splendour.

Srinivasa, Lakshmi Devi, Padmavati and Vakula Devi took auspicious bath, wore yellow silk robes, bejewelled ornaments and garlands. As Srinivasa was carrying the auspicious vessel, both of his wives accompanied him on either side, followed by the families of Tondaman and Vasunayaka, Indra, Brahma and others. Brihaspati, Vashishtha and others were leading the procession reciting Vedic hymns and the auspicious music was played. At the time of muhurtam, Srinivasa worshipped the cow at the

doorstep and entered the temple. The housewarming ceremony was successfully completed as per the ordained ritual. The angels praised the blissful temple at Ananda Nilayam. Fixing Lakshmi and Padmavati on either side of his chest, Srinivasa stayed under the divine golden Vimana and said, “Till the end of Kali Yuga, I’ll be here thus in the form of an idol giving darshan to the angels, saints and close devotees always.” In great delight, all praised Srinivasa in different ways. Narada and other saints eulogised his glory. Gandharvas danced. After the meals, all of them left for their abodes with the permission of Srinivasa. Brahma took permission of the Lord to conduct Brahmotsavas every year. Till now, these Brahmotsavas are being conducted every year.

It’s a well-known fact that Srinivasa along with Lakshmi and Padmavati has been fulfilling the wishes of the devotees in the form of an idol in the Kali Yuga and forestalling the troubles of Kali. The Ananda Nilayam of Srinivasa in Venkatachalam is the Vaikuntha on the earth. The devotees throng this temple for the darshan of Vaikuntha and get their wishes fulfilled.

31. The Episode of Koorma and Bhima

During the time when Sri Venkateshwara manifested as an idol of worship in Ananda Nilayam, there lived a devotee named Koorma in the Southern part of the country. He was a devout lover of father. When his father died, he collected his mortal remains

for immersion in the Ganga and set out along with his family. Hearing the fame of Tondaman on the way, he went to see him in Tondamnadu. Leaving his wife and younger son at a place, he went to the royal court alone. At that time, a debate was going on about the spiritual sciences in the full court. In the debate, it was upheld that the scholarship devoted to help was greater than to preach others; the latter was different and fruitless. It was nothing but a mere drying up of the throat. As the king concluded the debate with felicitations to the members and was about to go to his chambers, Koorma went to him and offered benediction in the Vedic way. The king accosted him reverentially and enquired about the purpose of his visit. Koorma said, “Hey king! I’ve heard about your reputation and wanted to see you out of curiosity. At present, I’m going to the pilgrimage to Ganga with the mortal remains of my father. My pregnant wife and five-year old son cannot walk long distances. I’ve come to request you to take care of them till I return from Kashi completing the ritual of holy dip in Ganga and immersion of the bone remains of my father in it.” The king promptly responded, “I deem it my good fortune to help a noble person like you. So, you may leave your wife and child here in my queen’s palace and complete your mission comfortably.” Koorma felt very happy and thanked the king. He left his wife and child in the queen’s palace as directed by the king and set out for Kashi.

Tondaman placed the pilgrim's wife and child in a safe palace endowed with all facilities and appointed guards for the building. The lady was living comfortably with her child in the palace. The guards meticulously guarded the palace not allowing even a fly into it. In the course of time, Tondaman forgot about her. More than six months passed thus. None has made enquiries about the well-being of the insiders.

A year lapsed. Koorma returned to Tondaman finishing his pilgrimage and enquired about his family. The king then remembered about it and didn't know what to say. He thought for a while and said, "Sir! Your wife gave birth to a daughter in time. At present your wife and children left for Venkatachalam yesterday itself along with our people. They'll be back very soon. I'll let you know as soon as they return. Till then you may stay at our inn happily, cooking the meals with the ingredients we send you." He sent the brahmin to the inn assigning some servants to serve him.

After Koorma's exit, Tondaman sent his son to see and enquire about the brahmin's wife and child placed in the special palace. The king's son went there and could find none but their bone remains. He informed the same to the king. Hearing this, the king was shocked. He immediately left for Venkatachalam along with his son, fell on the feet of Lord Venkateshwara and started crying. Having learnt

the cause of his grief, Venkatachalapati said, “Hey king! What a sin you’ve committed! What happened to your discretion? You’ve turned your refugees destitute. Will there be any one who is crueller than you? What an arrogance? I can’t stand my devotee being left in penury and bad luck. Though you’ve great devotion towards me, you’ve sinned a great deal. Your brother helped me a great deal. You’ve constructed an abode for me. Because of our close relationship, I’ll revive the dead. May I get the reputation of removing the sin of blatant sinners! You send your son and get their bone remains back quickly.” Tondaman sent his son instantly who got back them tied in a cloth on a palanquin to his father. Tondaman informed about it to Venkatachalapati. Srinivasa took the bundle to a pond near Pandava Tirtham to the east of Swami Pushkarini, stood in the waters up to the neck, placed the bone remains on a stone and sprinkled the holy waters on them with his cupped hands. Immediately Koorma’s wife and children were revived. There was a floral rain from the sky. From then onwards Pandava Tirtham got the popular name of Asthi Tirtham. Even the angels praised its glory.

Later Srinivasa said to Tondaman, “Hey king! I’ve helped you back to meet your requirement. From now onwards, I’ll be in the form of a worship idol till the end of Kali Yuga. I’ll be talking by proxy and protecting the devotees. Go back and entrust these people to Koorma and rule your kingdom

happily.” Thus saying, he went back to his Ananda Nilayam.

Accordingly, Tondaman handed over to Koorma his wife and children. Koorma was quite delighted and asked his wife before the king himself how she had been all these days. She informed that due to the divine illusion she had been in the belly of Sri Venkatachalapati and witnessed strange expansion of the worlds, Brahma and other angels, different worlds, Seven Seas, Seven mountains, great rivers and brooks and thick forests. Koorma felt his wife had been more fulfilled than himself. He praised Tondaman’s devotion for Venkateshwara and returned to his native place and lived happily with his people.

32. Tondaman’s Liberation

Though Tondaman was overwhelmed by the grace of Srinivasa, he regretted incurring the wrath of the Lord. He decided to regain the grace of Srinivasa by all means. So, he met the saints like Angirasa and requested them to tell him what he should do to get back the grace of Srinivasa. They thought deeply and suggested that he would get the grace of Srinivasa without fail if he worshipped him daily with the sacred basil reciting the Lord’s thousand names. Tondaman started worshipping the Lord with golden basil leaves reciting the Lord’s thousand names through Vaikhanasa priests. Though many months passed thus, Venkateshwara was not

pleased with it. One day Tondaman said to Srinivasa, “Hey Lord! Forgive my lapses. You’re the best in showering boons. I’m your devotee. Please show your compassion towards me.” In the meanwhile, a divine voice was thus heard, “There’re many who possess inordinate devotion towards me. But there’s none among them who committed grievous sin like you. Your sin won’t leave you. But because of my sense of gratitude towards Akasha Raju, I restored the dead to life. Otherwise...” The king interrupted the Lord betraying his arrogance and said, “Srinivasa! One won’t boast of the help one did to others however foolish one might be. There’s none in the three worlds a devotee like me! You shouldn’t forget that I’m the best of your devotees. It’s well-known that you’re the best in your concern for the devotees.” And he continued his worship with golden basil.

Srinivasa continued his efforts to suppress Tondaman’s arrogance. One day while Tondaman was worshipping the Lord in Sri Venkateshwara temple with golden basil leaves, he noticed very attractive earthen basil among the golden ones. Tondaman could infer that Venkatachalapati was not propitiated in his anger towards him. In order to suppress the darkness in him, he spoke to him with a clean heart, “Hey Resident of Three Worlds! Lord of Vaikuntha! Sri Venkatachalapati! Protector of Devotees! Sinless! Lord of the Destitute! Srinivasa! I’m a servant at your feet! They’re my refuge! I’ve

no other refuge but yourself! Is it proper for you to be indifferent towards me? Don't set aside me. Shower your absolute mercy upon me as you did earlier! Who's that devotee that set aside my golden basil with his earthen ones? Where's he? Please, let me know!" Srinivasa replied, "Hey King! You're not able to comprehend me though you're familiar with me for long! He is dear to me who is devoid of love or hatred. Whether he is a king of kings or a beggar, if he treats all creatures equal and doesn't commit any lapse in mind, word and deed, and is satisfied with whatever he has, trusts and serves me alone, he is the most important devotee to me. I accept fondly whatever he offers me. There're many such devotees.

"There's a potter named Bhima in a hamlet at a distance of one yojana (eight to nine miles) to the north of Tondamanadu. His wife is Tamalini. The poor couple don't desire any wealth, happiness or comforts. Whatever little gruel they earn with the sweat of their labour, they consider it a blessing and don't eat it without offering it to me. You've seen me accepting with love the earthen basil he had offered me." Having heard it, Tondaman finished his daily worship, shed all his royal adornments, went on foot like a common man to the hamlet goaded by the desire to see Bhima. Enquiring about his residence, he went to the hut in the corner of a slum area and fainted there. Bhima rushed to his rescue, washed his face with cool water his wife brought and made him drink a little. Relieved after

some time, the king asked, “Who’s Bhima? I’ve to bow down to the feet of that great devotee.” In the meanwhile, Venkatachalapati appeared before them.

Bhima then said, “Hey Lord Srinivasa! My salutations to you. I’m incapable of offering anything to you. Like the Elephant King I don’t know anything other than you. I don’t know that you’re so pleased with my blind faith.” In the meanwhile, Bhima’s wife Tamalini fell on his feet and said, “Hey Govinda who treats the devotees like his own children! Lord of the Destitute! Resident of Vaikuntha! Blessed are we! We’re so mean that we don’t know the ritual of worship. We’re penniless. Our minds are wedded to you! Pleased with our humble worship, you’ve blest us with your darshan. We pray to you to relish our food at our home to your fill and favour us.” Venkatachalapati said to her, “Mother Tamalini! Your food today is my ambrosia. I’ll gladly accept the food you offer me!” Saying thus, he along with Lakshmi and Padmavati ate the dishes the couple served. All the angels praised Lord Venkateshwara in different ways. The divine trumpets were blown. It rained flowers. In the meanwhile, a divine vimana descended on the ground. Srinivasa gave his divine costumes to Bhima. His twin consorts adorned him with their ornaments. The potter couple bowed down to the Lord, boarded the vimana with his permission and reached Vaikuntha.

Having seen all this, Tondaman could understand the best of his divine qualities and get rid of the

influence of his *rajasa* and *tamasa gunas*. He prayed to the Lord, “Hey Consort of Lakshmi! Lord of the Universe! Lover of Devotees! I’ve boasted out of my ignorance and arrogance that I’m the greatest of all devotees in the three worlds. Please forgive the lapse in my speech! I’ve seen your dearest devotee in my kingdom quite in my vicinity itself! The potter couple have opened my eyes. Protect me also by granting salvation. Srinivasa thought that Tondaman was freed from the darkness of ignorance and arrogance. He treated him more like a diadem of devotee rather than a relative. Tondaman took a holy dip in Swami Pushkarini, eulogised Srinivasa, left his corporal body and got liberated. Thus Soota, the commentator of Puranas, described the Lord’s play and its significance as mentioned in the *Varaha*, *Bhavishyottara*, *Skandha* and other *Puranas*, to Shaunaka and other sages to their satisfaction.

**Evam Haristatra charitra madbhutam
Kurvan jaganmatru samanvito girou,
Aste jagatyam cha surougha poojito
Dada dyatheshtam cha manorathan satam.**

Sri Krishnarpanamastu

Conclusion

**Venkataadri samastaanaam Brahmaande
naastikinchana,
Venkatesha samodevo na bhooto na bhavishyati.**

The shloka means: “There is no shrine equivalent to the holy Venkatachala shrine in the entire sphere of Brahmanda. There was no God equivalent to Venkatachalapati in the past; nor will there be in the future.”

Though the cycle of Yugas like Kruta, Treta, Dwapara and Kali repeats, it is a lie to say that there will ever be anything equivalent to Venkatachala shrine or Lord Sri Venkateshwara.

Venkatachalam can banish all the sins of human beings and endow them with wealth and ambrosia. There are many glorious, well-known, holy tirthas in it. All of them emerged only to drive away all the sins of people of Kali Yuga and consecrate them. Residing underneath the golden Vimana of Ananda Nilayam, the Lord gives darshan to the devotees with Lakshmi and Padmavati on his chest and fulfils the wishes of devotees. It is clear to every devotee who visits Srinivasa that there is no such God as Venkatachalapati in this world.

It is said in the Puranas that the Lord of Vaikuntha, having foreseen how people in the Kali Yuga perish with their interest in sinful deeds, got

Kreedadri of Vaikuntha established as Venkatachalam by Garuda to the north of Suvarnamukhi river. Due to Bhrgu, Lakshmi Devi had to leave for Kolhapuram and Vishnu had to live in the anthill of Venkatachalam. “It is all for our well-being alone.” The Lord had to incarnate like that to banish the troubles of Kali. It reveals his parental affection for the devotees. Interested in protecting his devotees, the God doesn’t mind doing anything. He emerged from iron pillar as Narasimha and lifted Govardhana hill with his little finger. Such deeds he performed many times to guard the devotees. Similarly, Vishnu manifested as Sri Venkateshwara to consecrate the fallen. It is a universally accepted truth.

The virtuous men, who came from the banks of Olga river, settled on the banks of Ganga-Sindhu plains were very great self-less people. Aware of the past, present and future, they prayed to God for the welfare of all the people. The great works like shastras and Puranas written by such men are the lights of wisdom for us. Those books are quite authoritative. Only when we follow them, we can experience the ordained path devised by them. Only when we treat all sorts of men of the world equal and with a sense of fraternity and face the troubles of Kali can human life be fulfilled. The great trio of our Acharyas are those who initiated us into such a well-known path.

Indian culture has not followed the discrimination on the basis of caste and religion. They believed in

the fact that all the people are the children of God. It is true that God will fulfil the wishes of all the people wherever they are in the world. It is the duty of wise men to adopt and propagate the universally accepted truth. Call it Sindhu dharma or Hindu dharma, it is the responsibility of every Indian to practise it. The pilgrimage is its primary means. Tirumala shrine is the crown of all the divine shrines in the world. Vishnu left Vaikuntha for Bhooloka because he felt that his promise made to Vedavathi was important. Vedavathi was reborn to Akasha Raju as Padmavati and married Srinivasa. Narayanapuram of those days is now in the name of Narayanavanam in Chittoor district near Puttooru. The Tondamanadu kingdom of Tondaman, brother of Akasha Raju, is still there near Sri Kalahasti in the form of Tondamanadu village. Though the Mahal (palace) and Venkatachalapati temple constructed by Tondaman do not exist now, the trenches are there as a witness to the existence of a fort there in the past.

Tondaman duly got a temple constructed for Srinivasa. That temple is popular as Ananda Nilayam. Srinivasa is there in it in the form of a worship idol retaining Lakshmi and Padmavati on either side of his chest. With his right hand pointing to his feet as the only refuge for the devotees, his left hand on his waist suggesting that the ocean of sansaara will be upto the waist level only for his devotees, the Lord gives his divine darshan with the conch and discus in his other hands. Even if the darshan is for a second,

it gives a lot of satisfaction and bliss for the devotees. It is the experience of all the devotees.

Brahmotsavas are held even now in the same order that Brahma conducted first with the permission of Srinivasa. The Ananda Nilayam of Venkatachalapati itself is the Vaikuntha of the earth. From that day onwards Vaikhanasa priests have been conducting worship of the Lord right from Suprabhatam in the early hours to the Ekanta Seva at night every day. Srinivasa has been giving his darshan every day to the thousands of his devotees, listening to their appeals and blessing them. That is why many devotees all over the world are learning about Tirumala shrine with devotion and diligence.

The Purana mentions that Srinivasa has retained Lakshmi and Padmavati on either side of his chest. But Padmavati is in a divine temple in Tiruchanuru near Tirupati. A story is in vogue about it from the ancients.

After the marriage of Venkatachalapati with Padmavati, Agastya said that the new couple should not ascend the mountains. So, the Lord got a cottage constructed near that of Agastya and stayed there with his consort for a period of six months. That is the present day Srinivasa Mangapuram. There is a popular Venkateshwara temple in that place. One day Sri Venkatachalapati informed his father-in-law Akasha Raju that he would be going to Venkatachalam along with Padmavati. Akasha Raju

arranged *sare* in the form of different kinds of garments, ornaments, servants, all kinds of provisions, articles, milk and ghee pots, carriers to carry them and ordered the workers to carry them along with Padmavati to Venkatachalam. As the workers were thus ascending the mountain along with the goods, Srinivasa asked Padmavati at Avvakona if she had brought curry leaves with the goods. She replied in the negative. Then Srinivasa ordered her, “The curry leaves won’t be available anywhere in Tirumala. It is essential that they be dried and packed together. So, better you leave the goods here itself and go back to get the curry leaves.” So, it is said that Padmavati had to stay in Tiruchanuru for the sake of curry leaves for some time. This is the reason why she happened to stay in Tiruchanuru separately.

Utsavas are held for Padmavati in Kartika masa every year. Several devotees will be attending these Utsavas. The devotees after having the darshan of Sri Venkateshwara Swami go to Tiruchanuru for her darshan. There will be raft festival for Padmavati in Kartika masa every year in its Pushkarini.

The TTD officials have been providing adequate facilities for the pilgrims to Tirumala-Tirupati from all over the world. To enthuse the pilgrims and ensure peace of mind, there will be many activities like ever fresh discourses on Vedanta, upliftment of Hindu dharma, Annamacarya sankirtanas and social

programmes. They have been publishing a number of spiritual books for the sake of pilgrims. Saptagiri monthly magazine is being published in different languages to enlighten the devotees. See it from any angle, Tirumala Tirupati shrine has emerged as a big experiential centre of peace, tolerance, generosity, beauty, unity and faith in the Almighty. In this context, it is described as the second one in the world. The Social and Cultural Department executes these programmes. The Publications Division and Spiritual Awakening branch take up a number of programmes every day to provide the necessary wisdom and inculcate theistic temperament among the people. It is the cause of pride for every Indian that Tirumala Tirupati shrine is recognised as the second-best spiritual centre in the world due to the efforts of these branches to activate the pilgrims.

It is true that the pilgrims visiting Tirumala Tirupati shrine call Venkatachalapati with different names like Venkatesha, Lord of Seven Hills, Venkata Ramana, Govinda, Helpful Relative for the Devotees in distress, Protector of the Destitute, the Lord who collects coins towards interest, Balaji, Andavane and get absolved of their sins. Recollecting God's sacred name is the means of liberation in this Kali Yuga.

**Shriyah kaantaaya kalyaana nidhaye
nidhayerthinaam,
Sri Venkata nivasaaya Srinivaasaaya mangalam.**

**Sri Venkataadri nilayah kamalaakaamukah
pumaan,
Abhangura vibhootirna starangayatu
mangalam.**

Prose: iddi Sri Srinivasa paadaaravinda
dhyanaamritaasvaadana mattacitta, Sri
Jnyanaprasoonaambika sahita Sri
Kalahastishvaraanugrahalabdha kavita vishesha, Sri
Kailaasavaasa chintanaamaanasasarovara vihaara
maraala mithuna Lakshmaarya Lakshmi Narasaambaa
dwitiya putra Sri Venkata Krishnaaryaanuja, budha
vidheya guntakatta Tiruvengada Soori naamadheya
pranitambaina Tirumala Tirupati Kshetra
Maahaatmyamanu kavyamuna dwitiyaashwaasamu
sampoonam.

Sri Srinivasarpanamastu.

**Iddi Sri Venkateshuni yiddha carita
Vinna jadivina, vrasina vijnyulakunu
Tama manoratham phalavantamagu! niha pa
Rambula sukhamu muktiyu labhyamagunu!**
