

# **MATRUSRI TARIGONDA VENGAMAMBA**

**(LIFE STORY)**

*English Translation*  
**Prof. T. Viswanadha Rao**

*Telugu Original*  
**Prof. K.J. Krishna Murthy**



**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati.**

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*Editor*

**Dr. Akella Vibhishana Sarma**

Special Officer

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## FOREWORD

Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba (20 April 1730 – 21 August 1817) is a poet-singer who dedicated her entire life to the service of Lord Venkateshwara in the 18th century. As a devotional poet known for her mellifluous metrical poetry, she occupies the prime place next only to Tallapaka Annamacharya. A child-widow, she refused to marry anyone considering Lord Venkateshwara her husband and remained a *sumangali* throughout her life defying the conventions. Having studied the yoga under Acharya Subrahmanyudu, she turned a yogini. One day when she was engaged in her constant mystic ceremonial worship of Laxmi Narasimha Swamy as usual, it appears some beautiful resplendent letters from the sky entered her face turning her into a poetess. She relates this divine experience of hers in the two verses of *Avatarika* of *Venkatachala Mahatmyam*. It is said that Lord Venkateswara used to allow her into the temple after temple hours to hear her poems and songs. After singing the praise of the Lord, Vengamamba used to offer ‘harati’ to the Lord each night.

Vengamamba has a number of works in her literary repertoire. Mention may be made of *Tarigonda Nrusimha Satakam*, *Nrusimha Vilasa Katha*, *Balakrishna Natakam* (*Yakshaganam*), *Rajayogamrutha Saram* (a *dwipada kavyam*), *Vishnu Parijatham*, *Chenchu Natakam*, *Rukmini*

*Natakam Jala Krida Vilasam, Mukthi Kanthi Vilasam* (all *Yaksha Ganams*), *Gopi Natakam* (*Golla Kalapam-Yakshaganam*), *Rama Parinayam, Sri Bhagavatham, Sri Krishna Manjari, Tatva Keerthanalu, Vaashista Ramayanam* (*Dwipada*), *Sri Venkataachala Mahatyam* and *Ashtanga Yoga Saram*. *Venkatachala Mahatmyam* stands out as the most significant work describing the glory of the Lord based on a few Puranas.

Even as a child, Vengamamba was deeply contemplating God and was pursuing meditation. Vengamamba enriched the tradition of Bhakti through the poetry she sang in praise of the Lord of Seven Hills. As a devotee of an exalted state, she earned the respect and reverence of all. It is interesting to note that Annamayya's descendents and Hathiram Math gave her shelter in Tirumala. She had the opportunity of going through the works of Annamayya, his grandson Chinnanna and others.

Their impact can be seen in her works. There is a need for the youth of today to know the life history of such a great poetess as Vengamamba.

The present book entitled, *Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba (Life Story)* details the life of Vengamamba lucidly. Dr. T. Viswanadha Rao, a renowned scholar, has translated Prof. K.J. Krishna Murthy's original Telugu work on Vengamamba in a simple, fluent, idiomatic style. This work, it is

deemed, is yet another lotus offered at the feet of the Lord of the Seven Hills with great diligence and reverence. I congratulate Prof Vishwanadha Rao for successfully accomplishing this task.

I appreciate Dr. Akella Vibhishana Sarma, Special Officer, Publications Division, TTD, Tirupati for taking initiative to publish this book.

In the Service of Lord Venkateswara



**Executive Officer,**

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,  
Tirupati.





**The line of Gurus of Matrusri  
Tarigonda Vengamamba\***

**Sadaasiva samaarambham  
Sankaracharyamadhyamaam  
Asmadaacharya paryantaam vande  
guruparamparaam**

(Salutations to the line of gurus that begins with Sadaasiva with Sankaraacharya in the middle and runs up to my guru).

Sri Sri Sri Someswara Swamy (Sri Sri Sri Yoga Bhogeswara Swamy)

Sri Sri Sri Vidyaranyaguru

Sri Sri Sri Brahmendrulu

Sri Sri Sri Swayam Prakasulu

Sri Sri Sri Satchitananda guru

Sri Sri Sri Mallikarjuna guru

Sri Sri Sri Avadhoota Desikottamudu

Sri Sri Sri Paramahamsakya guru

Sri Sri Sri Badabaaanala guru

Sri Sri Sri Sugyana Yogananda guru

Sri Sri Sri Jitendriya guru

Sri Sri Sri Digambara guru

Sri Sri Sri Parakaya pravesa guru

Sri Sri Sri Nityananda Gururaja Chandra

Sri Sri Sri Niranjana guru

Sri Sri Sri Bodhananda Ghana guru

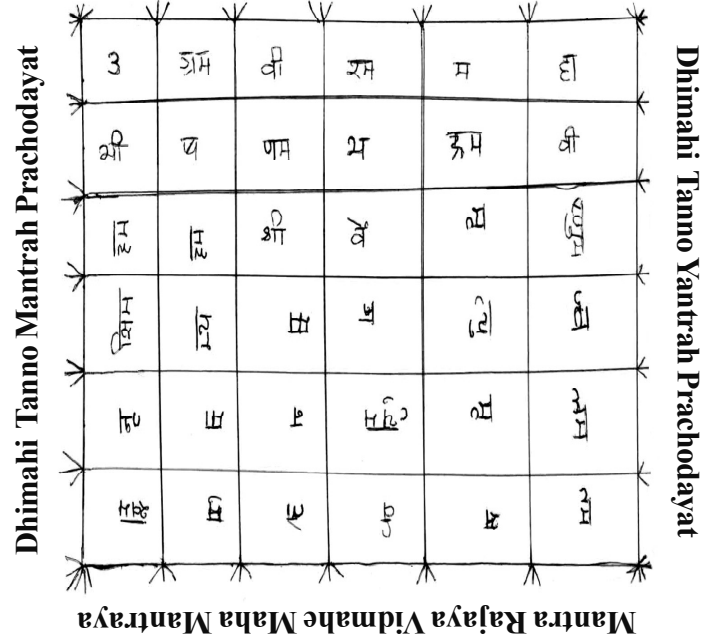
Sri Sri Sri Subrahmanya guru

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\* This line of gurus is taken from the preface of Rajayogaamrutasara written by the poetess Vengamamba.

## Om Namo Narashimhaya Namaha

### Yantra Rajaya Vidmahe Maha Yantraya



**Note :** The picture of the above yantra where the Nrusimha Mantra is inscribed is the exact copy of the copper yantra of the puja mandir of Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba.

This yantra is made of copper plate mixed with bronze.

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## **MATRUSRI TARIGONDA VENGAMAMBA**

### **The Life Story of Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba**

**(Verbatim)**

#### **Tarigonda**

In and around Tirumala, the holy place where Sri Venkateswara incarnated himself, there are innumerable holy places and pilgrim centres from time immemorial. The holy places witnessed many great men, savants, avadhutas and yogis enriched with the grandeur of penance. Among such sacred places, Tarigonda is one.

This is one among the ancient villages of Chittor. 'Every name holds a treasure' so goes a saying. True to this saying, the name Tarigonda has a specialty of its own. 'Tarikunda' means a pot used to churn curds. It is said that Sri Lakshminarasimha Swamy emerged in the form of saligrama in a pot used for churning curds. Hence, the village formed in that place came to be known as 'Tarikunda'. The name 'Tarikunda' was changed to 'Tarigonda' as people began calling it by that name. Tarigonda is situated at a distance of 108 km to the Northwest of Tirupati, near Vayalpadu.

Seven hundred years ago, there was dense forest where there is Tarigonda, now. In the centre of this

dense forest, there was a hillock spread all over. People from the neighbouring villages used to call the hillock, 'Prattimitta'. In the 'Prattimitta' region there was a huge lake called 'Palanutimadugu'.

At that time, Rayadurga of Bellari region was being ruled by Ramanaidu of Atchyuta gotra, a chieftain. Owing to a severe famine in the region, he set out from the place along with his followers, near and dear ones, herds and family. Having set out thus, he continued his journey in search of fertile regions. At last he reached the dense forest region of 'Prattimitta'.

With a verdant landscape, shade-giving trees, ponds of fresh water, big and small, the place that was a delight to the eye appeared very suitable for their habitation. So, the migrants began constructing huts under the trees around and lived there.

One fine morning at dawn Ramanaidu's wife Narasamamba decked a broad pot with turmeric and kunkum, worshipped it and having kept it under a tree, started churning it with a churning rod. There came a tak tak sound, the rod having struck a stone-like object. Narasamamba put her hand inside the pot, but she could not trace anything there. Twice or thrice she tried and in the twilight, she was struck with wonder and fear. She informed this to her husband, immediately.



### **Salagramam**

Ramanaidu touched the inside of the pot, gently. His hand met with a stout but soft stone, black and dazzling. He wiped it neatly and kept it cleanly on a tall pedestal. News about the stone reached everyone in the place. The young and the old came to witness the stone shape out of curiosity and wonder. At that time, a voice from the sky, addressed all those who gathered there, thus:

This is my sanctum! I am its presiding deity. I emerged in this form to protect you all. All of you settle down here. Propitiate me with devotion and commitment. You will be rid of your difficulties.

All the people who heard the divine words started witnessing and offering their prayers to the strange stone shape, again and again, overcome with feelings of devotion.

One among the crowd that gathered there, a knower of tradition and an adept in religious observances, closely examined the minute dots and the inborn lines on the divine stone. Then he prescribed their duty, thus:

This is no ordinary stone. It is a salagramam of Lord Lakshmi Narasimha. In common parlance it is called a 'puttusila'. The more we worship this, the more will he shower his blessings on us!

Later in the day, worship of the Lord Narasimha was performed throughout the day in the form of puja and bhajan with gaiety and enthusiasm. After the worship and offerings were over, the curds from the pot from where the Lord manifested himself, was distributed to all and sundry along with other offerings as a unique offering. From then on, offering thickly chumed creamy curds especially has come to be associated with some families as a tradition of the sacred place.

That night Lord Lakshmi Narasimha appeared in a vision to Ramanayya and directed him, thus:

This is the place where maharshi Durvasa worshipped me in ancient times. So all of you construct a temple for me. Worship me as your family god. The money required for the construction of the temple will be available in the nearby Marellagavi.

### **Construction of the temple**

On an auspicious occasion, Ramanaidu along with his retinue went to Marellagavi and performed the appropriate rituals and sacrifices. He collected the treasures secretly stored in Gavi. In Prattimitta, there is an old and small temple where Durvasa performed his penance. Ramanaidu got a new temple constructed in the same place. The sanctum sanctorum, the inner precincts, mukhamantapa, temple for the Goddesses, dhwaja sthambham, besides balipeetham, lateral or parsva mantapas, the

compound, galigopuram and other parts were all constructed beautifully as per the dictates of the vastu sastra. A lake was constructed at a distance from the temple. The idol of Narasimhaswamy with Srilakshmi meant for daily worship, and Salagrama Nrusimhaswamy inside the sanctum sanctorum, Abhayahasta Anjaneya Swamy, goddess Chenchulakshmi and other attendant deities were installed grandly in places assigned to them by scholars in Agama sastras, according to the Pancharatragama, to the delight of people amidst the melodious and auspicious tunes of musical instruments. From that day, Tarigonda acquired fame as a prominent pilgrim centre in the whole of Andhra Pradesh.

### **True vows**

Ever since its inception, Lakshminarasimha Swamy's temple is renowned for true oaths. The person who has to take the oath has to have a head bath, and will have to circumambulate the temple with soaked clothes, with musical instruments playing as an accompaniment. Later, he will stand in front of the Swamy, near the Balipeetham under the supervision of an archaka. Having offered incense by keeping it on the Balipeetham, he catches hold of the peetham and takes a vow that the archaka makes him to utter. The text of the vow runs somewhat like this: "In the name of Lakshminarayanawamy, I swear that neither I nor

anyone of our family is connected with such and such a crime. None of us committed the crime. I do not know who has perpetrated the crime”.

The person who takes such a vow, after completing the same, puts off the burning incense with both his hands. If his vow happens to be true, he will come out, unhurt.

If the vow happens to be false, the person taking the vow will come to harm along with generations of his family. The line of his family may perish. This belief is deeply entrenched in all the people of the region having a close affinity with the pilgrim centre.

It is under this belief that even those who get ready to utter lies in a court of law, dread to do the same in front of the mighty Swamy. There are instances galore wherein we come across judicial courts, village panchayats and societies of elders accepting such oaths. What is even more remarkable is the way the tradition of true vows is continued in the temple till today.

#### **Some other aspects :**

Some notable practices of this holy place that deserve to be cited by way of illustration in this regard, are:

1. As this is a place of Veera Narasimha, the drama about Prahlada is never staged here. A drama company ignorant of this came to the place in 1932 and began their show. In that show, while the episode

of killing Hiranyakasipu was on, the actor playing the role of Nrusimha became ferocious! The one playing the role of Hiranya Kasipa and who was sleeping in the lap of Nrusimha, sensed this. Afraid that in his ferocious mood, the latter might literally peel him, he got up immediately, jumped off the stage and ran away. The one who was to play the role of Nrusimha was fulminating in ferocious anger and ran after his fellow player!

The audience who read the situation, pacified the actor seized with Nrusimha's anger by offering incense and the play was stopped midway.

2. Every year, in the Tarigonda temple, during the month of Phalguna, annual Brahmotsavas of Lord Nrusimha along with his consorts Sridevi and Bhodevi are celebrated with great gaiety. But in these festivals, there would be no 'Mohini Utsavam'. The idol of the Lord meant only for promenading the streets for public view, is never decorated or paraded for public view as Mohini Avatar. As the Lord of this holy place is Veera Narasimha, there is no possibility of Mohini utsava in this place.

3. Among the well-known holy shrines of Narasimha in Andhra Pradesh, one can find one unique offering each, established as being dear to the Lord. This way, sandal offering in Simhachalam, sugared water in Mangalagiri did acquire an importance. Similarly, it is thought that churned,

creamy curds is a favored dish of Tarigonda Narasimhadeva, a lover of his devotees.

4. For generations, the shrine of Tarigondanrusimhaswamy has been reputed among the people of that region, guided by their experience, to be auspicious and convenient for weddings and other such occasions.

Ramanaidu who built the temple as ordered by Lakshminrusimhaswamy became the ruler of that place in course of time. Under divine grace, his rule extended to the nearby Chitticherla region. Hence, people started referring to him as Tarigonda Ramanaidu and chitticherla Ramanaidu.

Once in Ramanaidu's time, Ahobala mantri from Kanaala near Kovelakuntla of today's Kurnool district happened to go to Tarigonda. He heard the news of Lord Nrusimha's recent emergence in Prattimitta, from pilgrims. Being himself a devotee of Nrusimha, Ahobalamantri went to Tarigonda out of curiosity to visit the Tarigonda shrine.

Ramanaidu the chieftain was able to read the competence and worth of Ahobalamantri, a staunch devotee of Nrusimha and requested him to stay back at Tarigonda. Having provided him with proper accommodation, he honoured him appropriately. Not only that, he became a friend and confidant of Ramanaidu. From then on, people in the family of Ahobalamantri have come to bear the surname of 'Kanala'.

Tarigonda Vengamamba, a philosophical poetess and yogin was born in the Kanala family during the first half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. The important point to be noted here is that like her the forefather of their family was also a staunch devotee of Nrusimhaswamy.

### **The birth of Vengamamba**

Kanala Ahobalamantri belonged to the Nandavara saakha. His sutra was Aswalayana sutra, his gotra was Vasista gotra and the veda that his forefathers studied was the Rigveda. He was an adept in administration. Krishnayamatya was a householder living in Tarigonda during the early eighteenth century. Krishnayamatya was a good soul, free of evil dispensation, a kindhearted man and a knower of the Brahman. His wife Mangamamba was a suitable spouse and a blessed woman. Once the noble pair went to upper Tirupati, had a darshan of Lord Venkata Ramana and wished that they might be blessed with a girl child.

A year later, a female child was born on the festive day of Nrusimha Jayanthi, to the holy pair, of good tradition and devotion to God.

### **Childhood**

Devotion to God came naturally to Vengamamba who was incarnated as a result of Venkataramana's blessings. As her family was an abode of philosophical inquiry, the environment of her house helped her feeling of devotion to bloom. The girl

always used to play with sports and songs related to Tirupati Venkateswara and Tarigonda Lakshmi Narasimha. Her sports used to delight her parents and relatives.

For generations, the people of Kanala dynasty were reputed to be scholars and poets. Like his ancestors, Krishnayamatya was also a literary maestro and a philanthropist. He used to recite melodiously from works like Bharatham, Bhagavatham, Ramayana to the villagers who used to frequent his house.

The puranic discourses that her father used to deliver to the elders of the place, instilled literary knowledge of a high order in young Vengamamba. The songs and hymns that her mother used to sing in worship and religious observances have also helped her in promoting Vengamamba's literary flavour. In this way, Vengamamba who was endowed with extraordinary talent could easily absorb the essence of education from her parents.

At first Vengamamba's parents used to enjoy her acts like providing basil leaves, flowers and other ingredients for worship, singing songs with devotional frenzy. However as the girl used to sing songs in the streets and dance with devotional ecstasy, they were worried about her strange behavior as well as her future.

From then, Krishnayamatya used to seriously admonish Vengamamba now and then. Similarly Mangamamba used to employ her daughter in



domestic chores. The young Vengamamba, while obeying the dictates of her parents, used to pursue her meditation and her contemplation of the divine. While this was going on, some of the jealous women in the neighbourhood used to spread rumours that Kanala Krishnayamatya daughter was eccentric. Her parents suspected that their efforts for fixing a match for their daughter might meet with difficulties, if this goes on. So they decided to find a match for her as early as possible. They also firmly believed that there will definitely be a change in her devotional ecstasy if she were to be married. From that day, Krishnayamatya started looking for a proper match for her.

### **Marriage**

Those were the days when child marriages were in vogue. As per the dictum of the sastras, “Astavarshat bhaveth kanya”, there were parents in the society who wanted to marry their daughters at a young age of eight years and obtain the fruits of ‘kanyadana’.

Vengamamba sensed the intention of her father who was searching for a suitable bridegroom for her. She pleaded with her parents that god Venkateswara was her husband and hence they should desist from attempts at her marriage. But they mistook her words for an innocent prattle born of devotion.

Krishnayamatya severely reprimanded his daughter, saying that for a young girl, marriage is a

must and hence she should take the advice of the elders and stop contradicting the established practices of the world. Vengamamba did not respond. She kept quiet and believed that things will take shape in accordance with divine will.

Finally Krishnayamatya's attempts bore fruit. In a village called Naragumbapalem near Chittoor there was a wealthy householder by name Injeti Thimmayya. Their gotram was Srivatsa. Vengamamba's marriage was fixed with his son Venkatachalapathi.

People on the side of the bridegroom did hear about the attitude of the bride. But as the bride was charming like goddess Lakshmi, believing that her attitude may be set right after the marriage and also keeping in view the noble family traditions of Kanala Krishnayamatya, they accepted the proposal. Krishnayamatya performed the marriage of his daughter grandly on an auspicious day.

As it was a child marriage, all the relatives left for their places, along with the bridegroom. Vengamamba used to continue her devotional practices in Tarigonda as usual. Thinking that his daughter's devotional intensity might lessen after going to her in-laws' house, Krishnayamatya was temporarily at peace. But there was no dent in the devotional fervor of his daughter. Besides, Vengamamba used to persevere in her arguments with her father. She used to argue that as she herself

had no right over her body, it was meaningless to entrust it to someone else. She said that she who was devoted to Srinivasa in mind, word and deed, was donated to someone else. The pair's nuptial ceremony was planned when Vengamamba came of age. That night Vengamamba pleaded with the bridegroom that she might be treated as the wife of the Lord of seven hills and a very personal devotee of the Lord. To the bridegroom who entered the room, the bride looked like their family goddess Chaudamamba. Unable to approach her, he came out of the room, chanting the name of their family goddess.

The most important episode of life namely marriage having thus failed, a sorrowful Venkatachalapathy died after a few days as fate would have it. Some historians have recorded that he fell into a well in the outskirts of his village a few days after marriage as a result of the curses that Vengamamba hailed upon him in the room meant for their nuptials, the curses like "you fool, if you touch me, your head will be broken into pieces and you will be turned into ashes!" These fanciful reports were however, fanned by jealousy and spread like wild fire in course of time. Her writings provide a clear evidence of the writer's great respect for her husband.

Krishnayamatya felt extremely sorry thinking as to how fate opposed his attempts to make his

daughter's life, happy. The tragic event enhanced the feeling of renunciation in Vengamamba who was averse to worldly pleasures, from the outset.

Vengamamba consoled her parents that as people are not responsible for the doings of destiny, they should not take it to heart. The words of Vengamamba that reflected wisdom beyond her age, came as surprise to her parents and made them more sorrowful and amazed. Vengamamba did not believe in acts like tonsure as she believed that the omnipotent Venkateswara was her husband. She refused to strip herself of a married woman's signs. She firmly declared to the orthodox and traditional followers of religious practices that as God was her husband, she had no widowhood.

### **Guru's Teaching**

The death of her husband was the cause of a great change in her life. The renunciation and love of spiritual wisdom that were dormant in her woke up all of a sudden. Krishnayamatya was wondering seriously as to whether there was a path suitable for her tendency of renunciation and peace in her life. At that time there was a great vedantin by name Rupavataram Subrahmanya Sastry who belonged to the line of Vidyaranya, living in Madanapalli. As he was an adept in rajayoga, he was reputed as Subrahmanya yogi to the people. Remembering that Sri Sastry was an old acquaintance of his, Krishnayamatya started on a journey to Madanapally

urgently and narrated the story of Vengamamba, elaborately. He urged his guru to initiate his daughter into a spiritual path that would make her life, meaningful. Sri Sastry who was older than Krishnayamatya, better in experience and wisdom, accepted the request of the latter. Later Krishnayamatya took Vengamamba along with him to Madanapalli on a day suggested to him by Sri Subrahmanya Sastry.

There was a temple of Lord Shiva amidst paddy fields near the road to Bangalore, half a mile away to the West of Madanapally. The place was reputed to be ancient and sacred. The Shiva in the temple was called Yoga Bhoga Someswara Swamy. This was the one whom Subrahmanya Sastry worshipped. Sri Sastry who had the maturity of old age and learning used to spend along with his wife a life of renunciation in the precincts of the temple, worshipping God.

Krishnayamatya and Vengamamba had a darshan of Yoga Bhoga Someswara Swamy in the sanctum sanctorum. Later they went to Sastry's residence in the precincts of the temple. After having warmly welcomed the father and the daughter, Sri Subrahmanya yogi asked them a few questions. The answers of Vengamamba convinced him of the appropriateness of her stance. After puja, Subrahmanya desika initiated Vengamamba into Brahmaildy. He put some vibhuti on her face and having placed his right hand on her head with

affection due to a disciple, he made her chant the names of gurus in a line, with traditional devotion. He initiated her into the panchadasi mantra and Narasimha mantra and instructed her how to recite them.

Then he taught her yogic practices and elaborated for her, the subtleties therein. Thus Tarigonda Vengamamba became a disciple of Subrahmanya yogi who belonged to the traditional line of gurus under Srividhyaranya. Vengamamba stayed in the temple, performing with fervor, mantric chant and yogasadhana under the guru's supervision and thus she spent a virtuous life fit for an ashramite.

Having convinced himself that his disciple was capable of attaining spiritual wisdom on her own by yogic practices, Subrahmanya desika gave his blessings and permission to her to return to Tarigonda.

With full faith in the saying, "guru sakshat parabrahma", Vengamamba prostrated to her guru who was a shining personification of spiritual wisdom.

Having received blessings from her guru and after reaching Tarigonda, Vengamamba used to chant mantras and practice yoga with redoubled vigour. For this, she used to go to the temple of Srilakshminarasimha, daily. With unswerving devotion, she reached the pinnacle of yogic practices, in no time.

**Goddess Saraswati Blesses Her**

One day, Vengamamba sat in yogic trance for a long while. That afternoon while she was looking at the sky with half-folded eyes, after her usual practice, she had the strange experience of some letters entering her face serially descending from the sky with a glow. That very instant, she felt a new power possessing her.

The next day, she went to Madanapally and narrated the strange experience to her guru. Subrahmanya Sastry was amazed that his disciple received the fruits of yoga sadhana in such a short time and expressed his happiness at this. He explained the inner meaning of the episode to Vengamamba, thus:

“Owing to your good deeds in your past lives, you have attained fulfillment in yoga in a short time. As a result, Goddess Saraswati entered your mouth in a unique fashion in the form of letters. So, along with the practice of yoga, start composing poetry in your free time. Elders say that good poetry is equal to penance! Worship the Lord with noble compositions. Not only do you attain salvation through this, but you will also help people, to attain the same! Take it as an order from Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy of Tarigonda, your favourite god. Is he not the one who speaks and makes you speak!

Much later in her life, she described the strange experiences she had at a young age in Tarigonda in the beginning of Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam, a poetic work of hers, in two verses. The verses are:

(“One afternoon, while I was young, appearing in big rows of letters, you showed me Sri Tarigonda Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, guru and the primeval force, betokening Parabrahman, the experience of wisdom being manifested and with grace upon me,



explained the inner meaning of the same and tried to protect me. I praise Goddess Bharathi Devi, the presiding deity of speech”).

### **Self - Initiation into Writing**

Though an illiterate in her younger days, ignorant of prosody, not conversant with figures of speech, not learned in ancient works and itihasas, not trained in yogic practices, with the grace of Tarigonda Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy, encouragement from the guru, the literary atmosphere at home transmitted traditionally, with the help of all these, Vengamamba, in an auspicious moment, addressing her favourite god as “Tarigonda Lakshmi Narasimha, the ocean of mercy”, began composing poetry.

### **Tarigonda Nrusimha Satakam**

“Tarigonda Nrusimha! Daya Payonidhi” (“Tarigonda Narasimha! Ocean of Mercy”!) is the address with which Vengamamba’s first work Tarigonda Nrusimha Satakam, opens. It has 103 verses. While reading this satakam, we remember Kancherla Gopanna’s Dasaradhi Satakam, which is reputed in the Telugu-speaking world with the refrain, “Bhadragiri Dasaradhee! Karuna payonidhee”- “Bhadragiri Dasaradhee, ocean of mercy”!

Having come to know by hearsay of Vengamamba’s writing, some literates in the village criticized with jealousy, “Krishnayamatya’s daughter is ignorant of alphabets. How can she compose

poems? If her writing is poetry, then it will be fake poetry.” They meant that such is not true poetry, but poetry in circulation only by name.

In one of her poems, Vengamamba, who heard the adverse criticism of her efforts at writing, prays to her favourite god (Tarigonda Lakshminarasimhaswamy) to give the power of discrimination to such people. In her sataka she gives expression to worldly morals, her feelings of devotion, and her experiences born of yogic practices. An example of the devotional style of the satakam can be seen as hereunder:

O the beloved of Goddess Lakshmi, embodiment  
of cit!

The world body! The destroyer of fearful world  
creeper!

O the ever-fresh blissful-eyed! O the holy one!

Wish-giver of the devotees! O the merciful-  
minded!

I salute thee, believing that you are the Brahman,

Pray to thee for salvation, O Tarigonda Narasimha,  
ocean of mercy!

(“O you, who like an ocean of mercy, manifested yourself in Tarigonda, O Lord who please the mind of Goddess Lakshmi, give pleasure to the personification of wisdom, the one who is the body of the world, the sickle that slits the huge creeper of

the world, the one with beautiful eyes like the new blown lotus, sacred to all the world, the wish-bearing tree of all devotees , the one with a heart full of mercy! I serve you in full faith, with a desire for salvation, believing you alone are the form of Brahman. Please bless me”!)

The following poem with a description of Nrusimha incarnation, is another example:

O Trigonda Narasimha, ocean of mercy!

Much did I worship you.

Emerging from an iron pillar, tearing the entrails  
of Hiranyakasipa;

Drinking flowing blood, as a god who saved the  
young one!

My salutations to You!

“O Tarigonda Lakshmi Nrusimha Deva, ocean of mercy! You, who incarnated yourself by tearing apart an iron pillar with fearful sounds! I salute you. I worship you as the god of gods who saved young Prahlada, a doyen of devotees, by killing Hiranyakasipa, drinking the blood from his stomach!”

### **The barber runs away**

The people of Tarigonda and in particular, the orthodox ones were angry that Vengamamba was still wearing the signs of a woman whose husband was still alive, though her husband was no longer there. So they stopped visiting Krishnayamatya. They

conveyed to Krishnayamatya their firm decision to excommunicate their family from the Brahmin community, once and for all if they failed to make Vengamamba accept her widowhood!

On one side there was his daughter and on the other, age-old social norms. At last he yielded to the influence of society. The Brahmins of the place took the acceptance of Krishnayamatya for support and insisted that Vengamamba should go through a tonsure. Sorry that her father had to face trouble because of her, Vengamamba gathered courage thinking that what might happen might happen. With single-minded devotion, she meditated upon her favourite god Tarigonda Lakshmi Narasimha.

To the barber who wanted to approach her for tonsure, she, who was sitting in a lotus posture, appeared like the fearful form of the goddess. Shivering in fright, he ran away from the place, saying in fear and devotion quietly “O pardon me mother! I salute you”. As in the minds of some others also who gathered there, fear and anxiety emerged, the attempt was given up, temporarily.

However, some in the group of Brahmins of Tarigonda were not satisfied. They felt humiliated that they could do nothing when a girl was going against age-old traditions. So they started thinking of new ways and means to make her follow the age-old practices.

**Pushpagiri Sankaracharya Peetham**

They went to meet Pushpagiri Sankaracharya who was in charge of the spiritual chair for the entire region and narrated to him elaborately her aversion to traditional practices. They also invited the Acharya to Tarigonda. Srimadabhinovaddanda Vidya Narasimha Bharati Swamy who was in charge of the Pushpagiri peetham at that time obliged their request and sent word to the people of Tarigonda about his visit.

The scholars as well as the people of Tarigonda who used to scrupulously follow the established traditional practices welcomed the swamy with vedic chants and a purna kumbham. He was lodged in the precincts of the temple of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha along with his retinue, having been invited with due respect.

The next day after the offering of alms by the villagers a religious meeting was arranged. Many traditional-minded people in and around the place, visited the place to participate in the meeting.

With attendants announcing his arrival, ceremonially, the Swamiji graced the occasion by seating himself high on a chair specially meant for him. A disciple of the Swamiji informed Vengamamba that the Swamiji wanted to see her. With the view that one should not go empty-handed to visit the Swamiji in charge of the peetham, Vengamamba went there with a coconut in her hand. Then in front of

the Swamiji's chair, a curtain was erected at a distance. As suggested by a disciple of the Swamiji, Vengamamba stood behind the curtain. The curtain was raised and it was felt that she who was a rebel to tradition, should not be seen by the Swamiji. Thus like a criminal made to stand in an assembly (at that time like a common woman culprit) she was deeply hurt, though she was a great yogin.

### **Interaction with the Swamiji**

Swamiji started his lecture with a gloss on the glory of sanathanadharma and the duty as well as the conduct appropriate for a Brahmin woman, with noble illustrations. People in the assembly were quietly listening, nodding their heads in ecstasy.

Swamiji who was thus preaching, questioned Vengamamba standing behind the curtain, suddenly:

**Swamiji:** Vengamamba, don't you know that a Brahmin woman who has lost her husband, should follow the norms prescribed for a widow? It is said that you are going against established practices. May I know why?

To this, a humble Vengamamba replied:

**Vengamamba:** Swamiji, I cordially worship Tirupati Venkatachalapathy as my husband. So I believe ardently that I need not remove the signs that betoken a married woman.

**Swamiji:** you may worship Tirupati Venkataramana as a husband, but after you lost your

husband whom you married with fire as a witness, is it not proper to follow the worldly practices?

**Vengamamba:** Venerable acharya! Even as a virgin, I have been worshipping the god by mind, word and deed as a darling. Therefore I have been living with unswerving faith that I need not follow the worldly practices. I am resolved that there is no mistake.

**Swamiji:** Don't you know that transgressing traditional practices with this perverse logic, is not good?

**Vengamamba:** I pray that elderly people like you may kindly note that my argument is by no means perverse. Besides can a pativrata (a woman devoted to her husband) touch a barber, a man other than the husband?

**Swamiji:** Nothing wrong. To follow a traditional practice followed for generations, one may touch another.

**Vengamamba:** Let me know a sastra wherein it is thus prescribed. Not only that, does a bald head, necessarily entertain bald thoughts? Sir, even if I allow the removal of my hair, what is the guarantee that it would not sprout again? If you can stop that kind of regeneration, I will certainly allow tonsure.

Swamiji, who did not expect such a counter from a young village woman, got furious. But then he collected himself and queried her again.

**Swamiji:** If you are such a great devotee of God, why don't you even salute the gurupeetham who came to your village? Which sastra instructs you to behave like this? Is it a part of your philosophy or is it your callous attitude?

**Vengamamba:** The curtain that the Swamiji allowed to be raised, disallowed me from saluting the gurupeetham. Besides, you have been accusing me of not offering salutations and adopting a callous attitude. I am not trained in any sastra and I have never said that I am a vedantin. Only people like you in charge of peethas, must have been well versed in sastras. I am an ignorant one, a servant of Tarigonda Narasimha. If you are so particular that I should offer my salutations, kindly get down from the peetha and I will salute the same.

### **The Peetham on Fire!**

The answer of Vengamamba made the Swamiji, boil with anger and yet with the determination that he should make her salute the gurupeetham, he got down from the same and stood aside. He got the curtain that hid Vengamamba, removed.

At once Vengamamba devoutly meditated upon her favourite god, Lakshmi Narasimha Swami and saluted the peetham. That very instant, a frightful sound like the roar of a lion was heard and the peetham was completely burnt instantly as it was engulfed in flames.



The swamiji of Pushpagiri peetham was struck with fear and amazement at the unexpected event. He realized that Vengamamba was a great devotee of Nrusimha. He praised Vengamamba as one born with a purpose and in the line of devotees like Prahlada. He reprimanded the adherents of orthodox tradition who invited him there and returned to his place with his retinue.

### **The Saga of Nrusimhivilasa**

Vengamamba went inside Nrusimha temple. She offered her prayers to God with the utmost devotion for having shown his might in front of Pushpagiri peethadhipathi. Later, as a mark of gratitude, she composed a yakshagana, Nrusimhivilasakatha and dedicated it to God. From the title of the yakshagana, it is guessed that the story in the work is the history of Prahlada.

### **Annual Festivities of Racharaya**

Rayachoti (Rachaveedu) was an ancient pilgrim centre of Lord Shiva. The god there was Veerabhadra along with Bhadrakali. As the god of great power, he was known among the people there as Racharayudu.

In those days, Racharayudu's festivities were being celebrated. Kanala Krishnayamatya along with his family visited the place to gain mental peace. Vengamamba had a darshan of Veerabhadra, along with her parents. She also went to the temple of

Gangamma, a highly reputed local deity in Ananthapuri, a nearby place. At that time she thought of composing a yakshagana dedicated to the God there, betokening Shiva's glory.

### **Sivanataka**

Having pleased the Sun god with his music, sage Narada gets as a gift from him, an exquisite diamond necklace. Later the godly sage goes to Kailasa and offers it to Lord Siva in Parvathi's abode. Lord Siva gifts it to Parvathi. The news makes Ganga, angry.

To pacify her, Siva gifts her a necklace far superior to Narada's that he obtains from Brahma. The yakshagana ends on a note of bliss as both Ganga and Gowri are now friendly.

Vengamamba has moulded the Sivanataka on par with the episode of Parijatha apaharana. The yakshagana is also named Sivavilasam. It has also acquired the name of Sivaparijatham, thanks to its scribes.

### **Rajayogaamrutasara**

After Sivanataka, Vengamamba wrote Rajayogaamrutasara, a spiritual work. This was written in three sections or prakaranas in 900 dwipadas. It is based on the dialogue between Kapila and Devahoothi in the third Skandha of Bhagavatham. The plot revolves around Sage Kapila instructing his mother in spiritual wisdom. Adopting simple style, the poetess gives a synoptic account

of her spiritual wisdom. Vengamamba catalogues the line of her spiritual mentors, starting from Vidyaranya to Subrahmanyadesika at the outset of her work. This work is also known by the name of Rajayogasara. In Andhra, this spiritual work has acquired a fame similar to that of Sitaramanjaneyasamvada.

### **Balakrishnanatakam**

This is the fifth and the last among Vengamamba's works written in Tarigonda. This is also called Krishnna Natakam. The poetess has built the plot of this splendid yakshagana, having taken the outlines of Rasakreeda from the tenth skhandam of Bhagavatham. While she was composing the work meditating upon Krishna, the loving companion of Radha, with single-minded devotion at night in her abode, she had the divine experience of a direct dialogue with the presiding deity of love, Sri Krishna.

One night, during those days, the voice of a male was heard by the neighbouring women from the 'chamber of Vengamamba. The women who heard it, suspected the presence of a male. They decided to detect the man, expose Vengamamba, see to it that she be taught a lesson by the elders. So they hid themselves near the room.

The whole night was spent and as no man came out of the room, they made bold to enter her room. They questioned her angrily, "Who was the one who

was speaking to you a little while ago?’ “There is no man here except Lord Krishna, whom I worship ardently in my heart” was her firm reply. They were pacified as they understood her sweet devotion. They also felt repentant for having suspected her, wrongly.

Though the intensity of Vengamamba’s devotion was acknowledged by pushpagiri Peethadhipathy, the mindset of the traditionally-minded ones in Tarigonda did not alter.

They have stopped visiting Kanala Krishnayamatya. They used to turn their face away whenever they used to come across him. Though no restrictions were imposed on him or his family, the result was no different. So a good householder like Krishnayamatya was upset.

From the day Pushpagiri peetham was shifted from Tarigonda, Vengamamba would spend most of her time in the temple precincts during daytime. This was also a reason for Krishnayamatya’s anxiety. One day, Krishnayamatya spoke thus to his daughter who has just returned home, in irritation and anger:

Vengamamba, you seem to prove the proverb that a temple is more secure than a house. If you don’t like returning home, why don’t you stay in the temple itself?

Noticing her father’s irritation, Vegamamba replied casually,

Father, I will stay there only. I won't trouble you.

After hearing his daughter's reply, Krishnayamatya was deeply repentant.

### **Penance in Tarigonda temple**

From that day, Vengamamba was not to be seen either in the temple or in the village. The parents thought that she might have gone to see her guru in Madanapalli. Some rogues have come to the conclusion that she might have eloped with someone, and enjoyed a demoniac glee. Some who were fanatically orthodox resolved that it was a good riddance for Tarigonda.

From the outset, Vengamamba used to sit behind the statue of Abhayahasta Anjaneya in the wall to the left in Lakshminrusimha temple and sit in meditation for hours together.

One day the archaka who was decorating Anjaneya, happened to see Vengamamba in hiding. Having closely observed her in the twilight, he recognized her as Kanala Krishnayamatya's daughter Vengamamba. He was angry that the Lord's place will be polluted with her presence, and laboring under the mistaken notion that she hid there with some bad intent, called upon her, shouting at her, angrily. His words did not reach her as she was absorbed in a yogic trance.

At once, the angry archaka pulled her by the hair and brought her out. She opened her eyes and

looked at him, her trance having been broken. The archaka fainted, unable to bear her piercing looks. He got up after some time, fell at her feet and begged her to forgive him. (The archaka's name was Krishnamacharya. In later times he became a disciple of Vengamamba, was initiated into spiritual path and attained salvation).

Like Krishnamacharya, a gentleman called Murashavaly used to shield Vengamamba from eve-teasers, was initiated by her and attained salvation as per a popular belief. The local people in Tarigonda say that the Krishnamacharya mandapa and Murashavali darga stand as memorials.

From her side, Vengamamba thought that it was god's will that stood as an obstacle in the way of her dhyana. So she did not blame the archaka, but went to the sanctum sanctorum and prayed to Lakshmi Nrusimha Swami:

“Oh Lord, are you asking me to go away from this place through this incident? Where can this servant of yours, go? - While she was thus absorbed in prayer, the thought of the sacred Tirumala shrine, flashed across her mind.

### **Journey to Tirumala**

That very moment Vengamamba came out and set out on the path to Tirumala. “Mata nasti pitanasti” - “I have no father, no mother”- with this sense of resignation, she found her way to the woods of

Venkatachala. Chanting the name of Lakshmi Narasimha, unmindful of hunger and thirst, not afraid of prowling wild animals, she travelled for a day or two to reach a valley called Sandekaapu Mogalipenta. A sacred place called Yuddhakalateertham was nearby.

There at the feet of Anjaneyaswamy's idol, she sat in a lotus posture and began a severe penance for Venkateswara swamy. One day while she was thus meditating, God Venkataramana appeared to her and ordered her to go to Tirumala. Having propitiated Anjaneya Swami who protected her in the jungle, Vengamamba, filled with newly-born enthusiasm, quickly left for Tirumala.

Vengamamba, a born devotee and a great yogin, had the divine experience of having entered a hitherto unknown new world the moment she set foot in Tirumala. Instantly with ecstasy, she praised Venkatachalam extemporarily in the verse here under:

The hill reflecting Srungararaya's beauty  
The golden hill in the name of serpent king  
The hill with lakes dispelling great sins  
The hill whose mere thought yields salvation  
The hill that can with flowers diverse adore  
Vishnu

The hill with five wish-bearing trees  
The hill with parrots and cuckoos twittering in  
chorus

The hill with groups of animals  
 The hill sustaining gods  
 The hill witnessed by Alwars  
 The hill shining like the universe  
 I saw the hill of Sri Venkatesa.

She stood in front of the main entrance of ‘padikavali’ of the temple and paid her obeisance to Venkateswara. Having circumambulated the temple, passing through the temple street to the south, Vengamamba reached Swami Pushkarani. She got up after a dip in Pushkarani, had a darshan of Bhu Varaha Swamy and through the main entrance, went near the Swamy.

She enjoyed to her eyes’ content the presence of the Lord manifested on his own, owing to the fruits of penance of crores of devotees. On this occasion, she prayed to the Swami,

“Leader of all the worlds! Srinivasa! O Lord! I came here to serve you and spend my life in your presence! The dweller of Ananda Nilaya! O dispeller of distress! Govinda! Won’t you permit me”?

She drank the tirtham and ate the prasadam given by the archakas, having touched it to her eyes, circumambulated the Anandanilaya and witnessing with joy and contentment, Vimana Venkateswara and the golden summit and Spent the whole day, chanting the name of Govinda.



### **Consent of Alamelmanga**

At night, she sat in a corner of the thousand-legged mandapa, meditating upon the Lord and closed her eyes and fell asleep. At dawn, she had a vision of the Lord ordering her,

“As you thought of me, I invited you and gave you darshan. But if you want to live in this kshetra permanently, you need the permission of Alamel Manga! Permission of Alamelmanga!

Vengamamba woke up instantly. The directions of the Lord visited her mind again and again. She went into the presence of the Lord, making herself fresh in the early hours of the morning. She saluted the Lord and cordially pleaded with Alamelmanga in an extemporarily composed lyric:

Amma, may I stay here?

Sri Alamelmanga! Won't you accept me?

//Refrain//

I don't know why, but your Lord

Asked me to stay here.

Shower on me your warm looks

I stay here seeking salvation. //Amma//

I can't wander hither and thither

Can't argue much with sectarians,

Can't praise rulers, can't amass

Wealth and donate. //Amma//

Can't strain the body; Can't face trials.  
 What can I do? Can't join the crowd.  
 I shall praise your miracles here. //Amma//

Shall I be dear to Seshachalendra,  
 No other than Tarigonda Narasimha?  
 Show mercy! Permit me. Is it alright?  
 Tel me. I value salvation. //Amma//

### **Mahantha's patronage**

In those days, a pious man called Atmanandaji was in charge of Haathiramji's matham in Tirumala. His attendants used to move in and around Tirumala to submit reports of day to day events after collecting them, to the Mahant of the math. The servants of the Mahantha have also brought to his notice the information about Vengamamba who has arrived there from Tarigonda and who used to live with devotion inside, in the precincts of the temple, people gathering around her and listening to her words and the songs sung by her attentively, and her intention to stay in the holy place Tirumala to serve the God there.

That night Alamelmangamma appeared in a dream to Atmaramadas and directed him to give shelter to Vengamamba. The next day the mahant arranged for her stay in a hut to the right of the last stone chariot in the East temple street, to the north-east of the holy lake (pushkarani) and the temple.

He also gave an order that she be given provisions called “horaveccham” in the name of Vakulamalika, once in a month. Then he went to the temple and offered his obeisance to Vengamamba.

He respectfully explained to her the arrangements he made for her as per the order of the goddess. He accompanied Vengamamba and entrusted the cottage to her. \*Vengamamba saluted the merciful goddess with all her heart for having graced her thus through the Mahant.

It is during his period that Vengamamba joined Sri Venkateswara through yogic trance. Vengamamba used to prepare food in her cottage, offer it to the Lord and eat once in a day. Rest of the time she used to weave garlands with flowers and basil leaves, go to the temple and offer them to God. Besides the practice of yoga coupled with devotion, she used

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\*(Tarigonda Vengamamba went to Tirumala in her younger days when Atmaramadas was the Mahanta. After that in her long life she received praises from three Mahanthas. The names of the Mahantas are

Hariramdas (1785-1796)

Janakiramdas (1796-1813)

This was the Mahantha who noticed Vengamamba who used to leave after worshipping the Lord by hiding herself in the temple at night.

Govardhanramdas (from 1813)

to contemplate upon starting compositions to be submitted to god. She used to pray and urge Sri Srinivasa passionately and continuously that she might be granted the wit and wisdom commensurate with the task.

The signs of the cottage given to Vengamamba by Atmaram Mahanth are to be found till almost to date. i.e. A.D. 1985. In later times many changes have taken place in the process of modernizing Tirumala. So we see today a tamarind tree (the iconic tree of Tirumala) behind the Rambagicha guest house and a Vinayaka temple as some kind of a memorial. Near the temple of Sri Venkateswara there is the temple of Hayagriva swamy. From the time Vengamamba went to Tirumala, she used to worship Hayagriva. The latter was pleased with the purity of her devotion and appeared before her in a short time in his pure white form. Vengamamba urged the Lord of Words to bless her with the power of good expression by abiding in her thoughts. Vengamamba, who with the divine appearance of Sarada, the goddess of letters before her, came to be reputed as a poetess, has shone like a great poetess in Tirumala with the merciful grace of god Hayagriva

### **Vishnuparijatha composed**

To the poetic mind of Vengamamba that was thrilled with exquisite gardens all around with tranquil atmosphere, the god appeared to be a wish-bearing tree for the devotees. Inspired by this sacred thought,

the poetess composed the yakshagana called Vishuparijatha and dedicated it to both Venkateswara and Tarigonda Nrusimha, both being no different to her.

Vishnuparijatha means the Parijatha tree by name Vishnu, Venkateswara being a form of his. The story here is Sri Krishna bringing from heaven the wish-bearing tree by name Parijatha. The poetess narrates the story as having transpired mostly in gardens in Dwaraka. As it is composed with Sri Krishna as the hero, identified with Venkateswara, many details of Tirumala temple of that time find a place in this drama. Among the yakshaganas in Telugu, Vishnuparijatha finds a prime place like that of an exquisite pearl.

### **Tallapaka's Invitation**

The descendants of Annamacharya who were settled in Tirumala in the post of sankeerthanacharyas felt very happy when they came to know about Vengamamba's greatness as a devotee and poetess. Delighted that she belonged to their own scion, they gave with respect a small house adjacent to theirs in the north temple street for her free stay. So she left the cottage and stayed in Tallapaka's house. She nurtured a Tulasi garden in the backyard and used to worship Srinivasa with flowers and Tulasi (basil) leaves. Vengamamba could get acquainted well with the writings of the Tallapaka dynasty as she stayed in their neighbourhood. After a few days of stay in

Tallapaka's house, Vengamamba brought her younger sister's daughter to stay with her and help her. After some days, she shifted the idols and other things associated with daily worship, from Tarigonda to Tirumala.

### **Ramaparinayam (song of the Lord's marriage)**

Among the compositions of the Tallapaka poets a wedding song called Subhadra Kalyanam composed by Annamayya's wife Timmakka (Tirumalamba) greatly attracted the poetess Vengamamba. In imitation of this work, Vengamamba wrote a wedding song, Ramaparinayam, a work in dwipada metre.

The plot of this work is the ocean's daughter Ramadevi's (Goddess Lakshmi's) marriage with Sri Venkateswara. Vengamamba, the 'Madhurakavita Saraswathi' composed in just four hundred dwipadas, Ramaparinayam exuding Telugu milieu and tradition in a splendid style. This wedding song has also come to be known as 'Swami Pendli' (The Lord's Wedding).

### **Pandava Teertham**

There was a sacred lake called Pandava Teertham to a distance of half a mile to the northeast of Venkateswara's temple. During the Dwapara yuga the Padavas took a holy dip in the lake and obtained regal pomp, having won their enemies, thanks to

Venkatswara's blessings. So the lake got the everlasting and appropriate name of Pandava Teertham. It appears that at one time the Lord gave word to Vengamamba that he would dine on the food that she might cook with devotion. So she would cook delicious items, take them with her and in a quiet and solitary place, she would offer them to the Lord. As she used to invite him with her melodious songs and serve the food, the god used to relish the items. Some officials of the temple wanted to elicit to whom she was offering items daily having arranged them in a basket. They hid themselves in some shrubs in the nearby forest and started observing. At that time a tiger of unusual shape and size, roaring fiercely, leapt to the front of Vengamamba and went away ferociously cutting across the shrubs where the officers were hiding. The fearful scene made the officers shiver, lose their senses and fall into the shrubs. They could not gain their senses for a long while. They realized that the Lord came there in the form of a big tiger to give them a stern warning. From that day they used to look upon Vengamamba with great respect. Vengamamba who knew the nature and glory of the Lord used to worship the Lord as usual, being a great devotee.

**Akkaram Venkatarama Deekshitulu**

A government archaka (appointed by the East India company) by name Akkaram Venkatarama

Deekshitulu used to live to the west of Vengamamba's residence. Being a rich man with a large family and being a President of Vaikhanasa archaka society, he became famous as a prominent citizen of Tirumala. The egoistic Deekshitulu did not like the behavior of the woman who was discarded by her people, who left her place, opposed age-old practices, came to be recognized in Tirumala as a devotee, as a poetess, her going to the temple of the Lord to offer garlands of basil leaves made by her, such a woman being their neighbour, minding her business unmindful of people around.

So, he used to speak ill of Vengamamba with sarcastic words to the visitors to his house so that Vengamamba may hear the same. Yet Vengamamba, a picture of patience, used to spend her time in contemplating the divine, deeming everything as the will of God, hardly bothering about such words. Drunk with power, Venkataramadeekshitulu did not stop at that. He used to take delight in seeing to it that the leftovers of food in his house would be thrown on the flower trees in Vengamamba's backyard. Vengamamba's repeated appeals to forestall the neighbours, did not work. So she used to remove the leftovers all by herself and clean the basil plants and flower plants with water.

One evening Vengamamba seated near the basil plant in her backyard, was absorbed in a steady trance, contemplating the divine. No one noticed



how long she was in that posture. Meanwhile Deeshitulu's family had their dinner and the leftovers of food collected in leaf plates were thrown into the garden in her backyard as usual. This time they fell into her lap, fell on her feet, and her trance was broken. God willed that unprecedented anger should possess her. Instantly she looked at her neighbour's house and cursed, "you sinner, your dynasty shall perish!".

As a result, that very night, many members in her neighbouring family suffered from vomits and diarrhea and fell victims to a premature death. Akkaramayya ran to Vengamamba, fell on her feet and begged her piteously to withdraw her curse. The kindhearted yogin thought that all that happened was the divine sport of Venkataramana. "You have been purified owing to your repentance. From now on there will be one living representative of your family line" so saying she partially modified her curse, before sending him away.

### **Penance in Tumburukona**

Vengamamba was shocked with the above incident that occurred as a result of God's will. So she decided to continue her sadhana in an uninhabited place. She earnestly prayed to God Srinivasa to show her a convenient place for the same. She was prompted by the divine to choose Tumburukona that was ten to twelve miles away from the Tirumala temple. Tumburukona was a beautiful and lonely

place. Vengamamba did visit Tumburukona earlier once on a Phalguna poornima day in the early days of her stay at Tirumala. Vengamamba reveals to us in a song composed by her that she was saved by Rama and Lakshmana from wild animals and thieves while she was travelling from Tumburukona to Tirumala.

( See “The merciful Rama and Lakshmana saved me” 4<sup>th</sup> song, Navaratna keertanalu)

Guide me, o Lord Srinivasa,  
 Save me, o Lord, in more manners than one.  
 Follow me like a friendly shadow  
 To the place where you make me stand  
 Obligated as I am to stay there,  
 Guide me, O Lord Srinivasa,  
 Save me, o Lord, in more manners than one.

Singing thus, Vengamamba left for Tumburukona immediately, unnoticed by any. Staying in one of the mountain caves, she began a deep penance. Based on his personal experience, Maharshi Sadguru Malayala Swami told her after a hundred years that the place cannot be approached by any other than those who follow celibacy, perform pranayama and penance regularly.

For almost five years Vengamamba practiced deep penance in Tumburukona. There was a secret cave way to the sanctum sanctorum of Lord

Venkateswara of Tirumala from a cave there. At the outset of her visit, the Lord himself revealed to her the secret cave way. Every day after midnight, Vengamamba would make use of the cave way to go to Sri Venkateswara, where she would offer her devout worship daily and return home. Every night she would replace the flower garlands with which the archakas used to decorate the Lord, with Tulasi and flower garlands affectionately made by her and entertain the Lord by singing songs.

In the morning, the archakas noticed that the garlands that adorned the Lord were replaced. Struck with a sense of amazement, they reported the matter to the Mahanth.

So the Mahanth decided to stay in the temple at night to observe personally what was happening. He stayed inside the temple and asked the archakas to lock the temple doors. From a small hole in the sanctum sanctorum, he continued watching the idol of the Lord, attentively. Past midnight a hole emerged in front of the Lord's statue. From that hole, Vengamamba came out with divine fragrance and a new glitter. In her hands were to be seen Tulasi garlands and fruits gathered from the woods. She decorated the Lord with the garlands, offered fruits and prayers to the devotee-friendly Lord and left.

The Mahanta was dumbstruck with amazement at the unprecedented affection of the Lord. He was speechless and petrified (**the name of the Mahanta**

**who hid himself in the temple and who saw Vengamamba was Janaki Ram Dasji-1796-1813).**

The next day the archakas who entered the temple consoled the Mahantha, after they performed the service to the Lord at dawn. After some time, he got up from the stupor and narrated to them in an agitated voice how Vengamamba worshipped the Lord and left.

The inhabitants of Tirumala who were under the impression that Vengamamba might have given up her soul after cursing the official archaka (Venkataramadeekshitulu), came to the conclusion that Vengamamba was living secretly in the Seshachala forest and having come through a secret path, to worship the Lord, was leaving the place after the worship. They started searching for her in Tirumala forests.

From then on at her request Sri Venkataramana himself used to go to Tumburukona and used to be worshipped by the poetess. The poetess depicts the same beautifully in her Chenchu Natakam, a yakshagana.

### **Chenchu Natakam**

Vengamamba composed this yakshagana when she was living in Tumburukona. The story is that of the tribal folk living in the Tumburukona. She built the story based on the lifestyle of the tribal folk there.

Chenchulakshmi is the wife of Tarigonda Nrusimha. Her sister is a chenchu woman. Having married a chenchu man from the Vindhya mountains, she used to live in a colony inhabited by the tribals in Tumburukona.

One day the tribal woman goes to the Tirumala temple in search of her husband, couching her son in her upper garment. She speaks to Jaya and Vijaya, the guards of Vaikunta. To the queries of the guards she gives a graphic description of the habitations of the tribals, the places they visit and the marriage traditions of the tribals. The tribal woman tells Jaya and Vijaya, as to how tigers and cows, lions and elephants, eagles and serpents give up their natural animosity and live together, specially so in Tumburukona.

The woman gives a very natural description of the form of Venkateswara and elaborately describes the manner in which the chenchus worship the god. Meanwhile chenchu Naidu returns from hunting. As she was about to go for a darshan of Lord Venkateswara, he stops her and compels her to provide him with some food as he was hungry. She entrusts her child to her husband and goes into the forest. A tiger frightens him and kidnaps the child. Returning, she is worried about her child. She salutes the God with these vows:

Locking the mouth, saluting God at every step, carrying a big lighted lamp I will come for your

darshan. I will make my child offer rupees in your hundi. I will make the child salute you by making him roll on the floor.

She prays to God to save her child from the tiger. The Lord saves the tribal child from the tiger and entrusts it to the woman. The woman fulfills the vows she makes to the Lord and then returns to her house in the tribal colony.

Tumburukona is the sacred region visited in olden days by sages like Tumbura and Agatsya among others. In later times it was the habitation of many sages. The great yogin Vengamamba depicted in a very natural manner, Tumburutirtha and Tumburukona, the venue of her penance in her yakshagana through the character of the tribal woman.

### **Chandrasekhar, the Leper (Pushkaraneejudu)**

As ill luck would have it, a dweller of Kanchi region, was afflicted with severe leprosy. Rejected by relatives and detested by people he lost the zeal for life. He wanted to have a darshan of Lord Venkateswara before he might breathe his last owing to the fatal disease. With great difficulty, he somehow made it to the holy shrine of Tirumala. People at the temple refused him permission to step into the temple. "What kind of a life is this that does not allow me to have a darshan of the Lord?" he mused desperately, detesting his life. He took to the forest path and reached Tumburukona, inadvertently.

He could go no further, troubled by hunger and thirst. The quiet cave reverberated with his desperate appeals to the Lord. Vengamamba who was standing in front of the cave heard his desperate cries. She took pity upon the leper and gave him, some fruits and water offered to the Lord earlier and helped him to calm down.

“you will be well with the grace of Lord Venkataramana. But you should not reveal to any one that you have seen me here. If you break this condition you will be endangered. Take care! Close your eyes”, Vengamamba warned the brahmin.

When Chandrasekhar opened his eyes he was rising up from the sacred lake Pushkarani. The pilgrims having a bath there were amazed, stunned to see a new figure emerging from the lake. They thought he must be a sage or siddha. So they worshipped him by offering him flowers and fruits. People started calling him Pushkaraneejudu as he emerged from the Pushkarani. He used to move in Tirumala secretly and silently like a sage.

The brahmin who was treated with respect by the people of Tirumala, gained perfect health, became arrogant and after a few days, revealed the presence of Vengamamba to the people of the town’. Instantly under the influence of Vengamamba’s curse he died, his head having been broken’

Till recently his statue in stone lying down flatly and the Tulasi tree with its appurtenances in the place

where he died were there at a distance to the temple of Adivarahaswamy to the west bank of Swami Pushkarini'

### **Coming once again to Tirumala**

The fact of Vengamamba's penance and presence in Tumburukona came to the notice of the people of Tirumala, owing to Chandrasekhar. So the mahant with some other officers and people went to the cave where Vengamamba used to stay, accompanied by the holy band, playing.

"Mother! Please come again to Tirumala and make our lives fruitful", they respectfully prayed to her

(The cave where Vengamma performed her penance has attained fame as 'Vengamambagavi' among people. In the same cave, Parankusadas, a resident of Chennai and Maharshi Malayala Swamy performed their penance and obtained unprecedented spiritual experience. Near this cave there was another cave called Siddheswara guha. It is believed that the Siddhas used to pray to the parabrahman, in this cave).

She took their appeal as the Lord's order and returned to Tirumala. She went to her earlier home in Tirumala. Standing once on one foot near the Tulasi plant in her house and looking at the pinnacle of the temple she extemporarily composed and sang Sri Venkateswara Manjari, a splendid stotra with consummate devotion.



### **Sri Venkateswara Krishna Manjari**

This work has acquired the reputation of being a magnum opus among her works as she composed it with great devotional fervor, having reflected upon Sri Venkateswara as Sri Krishna with great impact among the people.

This beautiful prayer that flows into 144 dwipadas with the word Krishna every now and then as an address to the Lord, has established itself as being proper for a daily chant.

In many parts of Andhra Pradesh, devotees, in particular the women devotees, used to chant it daily and feel blissful.

Nine dwipadas at the end of the stotra comprising a dedication and effect of the chant, endowed it with fullness. This work that spells mangalsasanam to Sri Krishna paramatma is said to be equal to the chant of Krishna Mantra.

### **Vengamamba's Brindavan and Math**

After returning from Tumburukona, Vengamamba acquired a vast site in a high place to the north of her house. To the East of that site, she got a gundubavi, a low-lying well (a gundubavi is a circular well with steps to descend) dug and nurtured some fruit trees, flower trees and a garden of basil plants.

To the garden thus developed by her, she gave the name of Brindavan suggesting the Brindavan

where Sri Krihna used to saunter, on the shore of sacred river yamuna in Dwaparayuga. In course of time, huts were built all around the basil garden. Women and among them some good natured women who used to go there to listen to Vengamamba's spiritual discourses, would lodge there.

In the middle of the flower garden, Vengamamba, the great yogin and poet-sage used to sit on a stone slab provided by her disciples and would sit there, contemplating the divine or weaving basil leaf garlands or writing books. It appears a white serpent used to visit the place and canopy her head. The white serpent used to roam the garden without harming anyone, according to the residents of Tirumala.

After the poetess returned to Tirumala from Tumburukona, the writings from her pen took shape at first in that quiet and sacred garden. The people of Tirumala call the Brindavan of Vengamamba as Tarigannamma tota or Tarigondamma tota. Every Friday they offer prayers to her, circumambulating her tomb, worshipping her by lighting camphor, offering prayers, fruits and such like and place their wishes before her. Till to date some women narrate their experiences, saying that mother Vengamamba gives advice in their dreams or visions to those who believe in her in mind, word and deed. Just as the garden nurtured by Vengamamba has come to

acquire fame as Brindavan, the house where she used to live has also come to be called Vengamamba's math as she was a great yogin and ascetic.

In the deeds of charity made by zamindars, lords of samsthanas to help her donate food during the festivities of Nrusimha jayanthi, they mentioned clearly that the contributions made were meant for Matrusri Tarigonda Vengmamba math. One may say in brief that during her time, the Brindavanam and math established by her gained fame as sacred places worth being visited by the pilgrims.

### **Asta Ghantaalu**

By the time Vengamamba established Brindavan, there were eight scribes who could write palmyra scripts and who were called Asta Ghantaalu. These scribes would make eight copies of each work written by the great Poetess.

From those scripts and based on other evidences, we could gather some of their names as of today. They are:

1. Narasappa, the son of Garidimitta  
Chidambarayya'
2. Puduru Chandrasekhara Pillai,
3. Ratnagiri Vithoba Pant,
4. Gademsetti Pullayya,
5. Bhojampati Abbayyanaidu.

In those days the representatives of samsthanas like Venkatagiri, Sri Kalahasti, Karvetinagram, Kuchipudi Bhagavatulu, pauranikas and enthusiastic readers used to go to Tirumala, request Vengamamba and used to devoutly carry with them copies of Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam, Sri Bhagavatham, Vishnu Parijatham, Ramaparinayam among others.

### **Ammoramma Bavi**

Vengamamba was not content with the establishment of Brindavanam. To provide Tulasi garlands aplenty she acquired some land at a distance to the footpath leading to Papavinasanatirtha to the North of Brindavan. She wanted to get a big well dug to supply water for another big garden she wanted to grow. In the process, a big stone stood in the way.

Then Vengamamba went inside the well and prayed to Goddess Ganga Bhavani, extemporarily:

O mother! Ganga Bhavani! Come!

Famed and guileless as thou art, //mother//

You were born from Srihari's feet,

You abided in the braids of Shiva, the destroyer  
of puras

You became sanctified, you

Blessed us with your presence

Received worship from us. //O mother//

Instantly the rock in the well was split and gave way to some extent (Anjaneya, the God of her worship came there in the disguise of an old man bearing a crowbar and a shovel and after he split the rock, according to another version, it is said that Vengamamba offered her prayer). The inhabitants of Tirumala who came to know this showered praises on the effectiveness of the great yogin's words.

The well that Vengamamba got it dug is shaped like a small lake. This well is known to people as Ammavaribavi (Ammoribavi). (Those days, pilgrims who used to visit Tirumala used to worship the water in Ammoramma Bavi as sacred, as Goddess Ganges came out because of Vengamamba's prayer).

In later times, to commemorate Vengamamba's prayer to Gangabhavani, Gangamma's idol was installed in a nearby place. As it is installed in a place near the road to papavinasanam teertha, people came to call goddess Gangamma, Bata Gangamma.

Some of Vengamamba's disciples picked up a big fragment of a big rock that was split when Vengamamba stood inside the well praying to the Goddess and placed it in Brindavan in the shape of a stone seat for the poetess.

In accordance with her disciple's request, she used to sit on the stone seat, weaving garlands, meditating on salvation, writing books, delivering spiritual discourses for several years, pursuing religious practices.

Such a glorious historical monument is now glued to her tomb like a wall.

### **Rukmini Natakam**

The first ever work that the poetess composed in Brindavanam established by her was Rukmini natakam. This work is now unavailable. Based on its title it is conjectured that the main story in the yakshagana is Rukmini's marriage with Sri Krishna.

### **Gopika Natakam (Golla Kalapam)**

This is a philosophical yakshagana. Its other titles are Golla Kalapam and Golla Katha.

The heroine of this work is a shepherdess. She comes on to the stage in a naturally beautiful manner. She enters into a dialogue with a witty Brahmin. During their conversation, subjects like the evolution of a child from embryo stage till its death, the preparation of curds to how butter is obtained, the relationship between jivatma and paramatma and such spiritual questions are discussed at length. Hence in Vengamamba's Golla Kalapam, 'yajnapu pattu' is an important episode'

Annabattula Mangatayaru, a woman resident of Mummadivaram of East Godavari continues to stage along with her students, Vengamamba's Golla Kalapam in a splendid fashion.

At the outset of the nineteenth century a scholar named Subbarayudu who came all the way from

Chittoor to Mummadvaram, trained the women artists there in staging the Golla Kalapa yakshagana. The grandmother of Mangatayaru is an important woman artist who belonged to this practice, taught by Subbarayudu.

From this it can be understood that the Gollakalapam of Vengamamba is very much alive in the form of its being staged in the Mummadvaram region. It is necessary to get this yakshagana printed.

### **Sri Bhagavatham (Dwipada Kavya)**

One fine morning (perhaps in the Brindavan garden established by her) Vengamamba was thinking of salvation. At that time Sri Venkateswara visited her in the form of a Brahmin. “Compose the philosophical content of Bhagavatham briefly in such a way that men in the street may be able to follow it.

Include elaborately in those episodes the daring acts of Srihari, his exploits, his incarnations, his glory”, he ordered her. From then on, Vengamamba used to pray to God that she may be granted the opportunity to compose Bhagavatham in that fashion in Telugu.

As she was thus praying, that day in the afternoon, Lord Venkateswara came near her in the form of Balakrishna. He put the Bhagavatha manuscript in palmyra leaves in her hands. He suggested to her that she should compose it in dwipada metre.

As per the dictates of the Lord, she wrote twelve skandhas in dwipada, based on the Bhagavatham in verse. Vengamamba reveals in this that Pattabhirama who made Bammera Potaraju compose Bhagavatham in verse, will also make her write it in dwipadas. However the seventh, eighth and ninth skandhas written by Vengamamba are not yet available. Even the other skandhas have to be printed with the grace of the Lord.

Vengamamba gave the meaningful name of Sri Krishna Leelamrutham to her dwipada Bhagavatham.

### **The Chariot Stops**

From the day that she settled in Tirumala she used to offer Tulasi garlands during the day and camphor haarathi at night for ekantha seva. The archakas were envious that a woman that too one who opposed traditional practices was offering camphor haarathi to the Lord. So one night at the time of ekantaseva, they spoke mockingly of her haarathi offering so that she could hear them. With a sense of tolerance that the words of the people in service of the Lord were acceptable to her, she did not go to the temple, next day. She offered haarathi to Srinivasa in her abode. The archakas mockingly said to themselves that the teasing words a day before have had a good effect on her and that as a result she would give up camphor offering to the Lord.

The next day was the chariot festival of the Lord. The mountainous chariot of Sri Venkatanatha that



was moving forward with determined devotees pulling it along, stopped moving forward when it reached Vengamamba's abode, north to the temple street!

Many have tried in many ways to move it in vain. The archakas have realized that it stopped because of the intensity of Vengamamba's devotion. With repentance, they approached Vengamamba and begged her to excuse their misdeeds and go up to the chariot, Offer camphor haarathi, and see to it that the Lord's chariot moves forward. With great devotion to the god of gods glittering in the company of Sridevi and Bhudevi as per the wish of the Mahantha and others, she offered nirajanam with camphor. At once the chariot moved forward as usual and reached its destination. From that day all the officers of the temple welcomed her haarathi as nitya haarathi.

### **Mutyala Haarathi**

The next day while in ekanthaseva, Vengamamba was offering camphor haarathi, Sri Venkateswara showed her his virata form with his ten incarnations. At that time Vengamamba prayed to God that her camphor haarathi might continue uninterruptedly. The Lord gave his nod with his beautiful face lit by a smile.

That night the Lord appeared to the officers and archakas in a vision and ordered them to see that Vengamamba's haarathi offering must be carried on regularly in his Ekanthaseva. Even till today this goes

on uninterruptedly with the name of Nityamutyala haarathi and Tarigondavari haarathi.

In this context, it is worth listening to the story of Mutyala haarathi.

In the middle of a silver idol, a figure that stands erect in a big plate of panchalohas glued to the same, the incarnations of Vishnu in outline are studded with silvery pearls, one incarnation a day. The decoration is made with flour and kunkum around each incarnation. In the middle of the plate, camphor is kept in a small bowl. A plate thus made ready, is carried for Sri Srinivasa's ekanthaseva to be handed over to the archakas, by the successors of Vengamamba's family.

The camphor lighted in the plate is offered to the main idol, and later to Bhoga Srinivasa murthy reclining on the bed to the delight of the onlookers. This is the last among the daily services offered to Sri Venkateswara. Only because of the haarathi, the saying Tallapakavari laali (lullaby), Tarigonda haarathi, came to light.

While she was alive, she used to offer the haarathi personally, singing a long song of twelve lines, beginning with "Sri Pannagadri vara sikharagra vasunaku". (This mutyala haarathi song is given at the end of the book as the ninth song of Navaratnakeertanalu). In order that the Mutyalahaarathi service that she started with the Lord's nod might continue even after her, she adopted Narasappa.

Narasappa's wife was Chengamma. The daughter born to this couple was Lakshmamma'. Lakshmamma's husband Gammanna belongs to the Garidimitta Cheenepalli dynasty.

To the couple Lakshmamma and Gammanna were born two sons Gangadharappa and Narasappa. Gammanna was the Son of Gangadharappa, the elder Son. He was a bachelor. Chidambarappa was the son of Narasappa, the second son. Subrahmanyam was his son. Viswamurthy was the son of Subrahmanyam. At this hour, Viswamurthy is performing the Mutyalahaarathi service. The dynastic line formed by Vengamama's adoption for offering the service of Mutyalahaarathi is shown hereunder:

**Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba**

Birth: The year Sadharana,

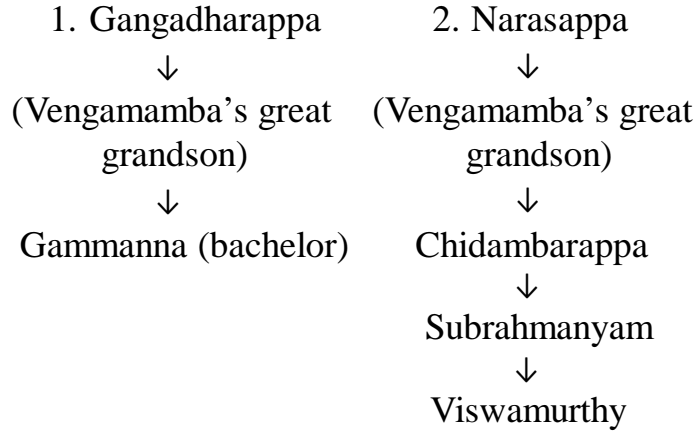
Paramapadam: Vaisakha suddha chaturdasi, Monday,

The year Eswara, Sravana Suddha Navami, Nrusimha Jayanthi festival day, A.D. 1730-4-20 Thursday,

A.D. 1817-8-21 Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam (poetic work)

Narasappa (adopted son of Vengamamba)..... Chengamma (daughter-in-law)

Lakshmamma (Vengamamba's grand daughter), Garimitta Cheenapalli Gammanna (Lakshmamma's husband)



### **Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam (poetic work)**

Among all the works of Vengamamba, Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam may be considered the crown-like magnum opus. This is a poetic work of six cantos. It is spread over almost sixteen hundred verses. From the day this great work was penned by Vengamamba, It took a lead in announcing the miraculous workings of the holy shrine of Venkatachala and also in promoting God Srinivasa's spiritual impact on Andhra Pradesh. Borrowing from three puranas, the Varahapurana, the Bhavishyottara purana and the Padma purana, Vengamamba translated this work freely, independently, and beautifully, full of devotional fervour.

In Telugu, the only Mahabharatham is the Andhra Mahabharatham of the poet trio. Bhagavatham means Potana's Andhra Maha Bhagavatham. Similarly when one thinks of Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam, it is Sri

Tarigonda Vengamamba's Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam that has gained fame and popularity.

This work is also famous for directing brides in search of bridegrooms. It is believed by people that if any bride were to make a copy of the work devoutly and donate it to the deserving, such brides would get a suitable bridegroom in due course.

There are two reasons for this - 1. The fact that Srinivasa's wedding is described in it, 2. The mighty work being composed with sacred and poetic commitment by Vengamamba, who belonged to the inner circle of the Lord's devotees.

### **Upper garment to Hand**

After ekantaseva in the temple, Vengamamba used to sit in a room in her house, singing songs with castanet in her hands performing bhajan and used to feel devotional empathy. After the archakas used to close the doors of the temple, the Lord used to visit her. The Lord used to listen to the episodes from Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam and the songs sung by the great devotee, enthusiastically. He would even dance in ecstasy sometimes.

As this was going on, one day at dawn, Vengamamba pleaded with the Lord thus:

O Lord Srinivasa! I have a small request. You should always be like this, without fail. As you are omnipresent, though you may stay with me all the time, the services associated with you, be they a

hundred thousand, will go on unaffected! As she was speaking thus the Suprabhata seva in the temple was on, and time for opening the golden threshold, was nearing. So, thinking that the Lord will leave immediately, Vengamamba caught hold of the Lord's garment firmly, expecting the Lord to answer her queries.

As there was no time left, the Lord disappeared from there, instantly. As the Lord left in great hurry, a part of his garment was torn and the torn portion was left in the hands of the devotee! O Lord, forgive me, forgive me!, so saying she held the torn piece of his silken garment, touched it to her eyes, and preserved it securely in her poojamandiram.

The archakas who were supposed to offer camphor haarathi after the early morning service, noticed the garment of the Lord being torn. The absence of a piece of the Lord's garment frightened them. That very instant they informed it to the Mahanta and other officers. The latter were dumbfounded.

The officers of the temple were clueless as to how a part of the golden-lined garment that adorned the idol of the Lord in the sanctum sanctorum, disappeared overnight, while the locks of the temple were still on. There was no chance of Lord Srinivasa's garment being torn by thieves. They felt that if they consult the inner circle of devotees of the Lord, they may be able to know something.

Accordingly the name of Tarigonda Vengamamba flashed across their mind.

The archakas who were reminded of what happened on the day of the chariot festival, went straight to her house. They saluted her and told her about the Lord's silken garment.

“The Lord's garment is in the neighbouring room, in the pujamandir. Please go and get it”, Vengamamba told the archakas, softly. They took the garment eagerly and looked at it, after unfolding it. The garment had no chinks at all and on both sides it glowed imprinted with the insignia of the Lord. The amazement of the archakas knew no bounds. They kept the untorn garment in a plate with great devotion and went to the temple. They were even more surprised that even the torn garment of the Lord was not to be seen on the idol of the Lord!

Then the Mahanth said, “All this is the sport of Lord Vishnu. The Lord creates such situations now and then to fortify devotional feelings in the common people by advertising the glory of the devotees of his, to the world”.

All heaved a sigh of relief at the resolution of an intricate problem strangely formed. The happy archakas performed an abhishekam for the Lord with a thousand pots, chanting veda. They decorated the lord beautifully with the silken garment they collected from Vengamamba's house. Later they offered

haarathi to the Lord with camphor and butter. The devotees among the Mahanth's family praised the Lord with cries of victory dancing with joy and shouting, jai Balaji, jai Balaji. As tears of joy welled up in their eyes, the devotees gathered there showered praises on the Lord.

### **Astanga Yogasaram**

Astangayogasaram is the second among the poetic works of Vengamamba. In the third canto of Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam the methods associated with the practice of yogavidyaas explained to Bhudevi by Aadivarahaswamy are described in eighty six prose pieces and verses (from 80<sup>th</sup> prose piece to 165<sup>th</sup> verse). All these yogic practices based on the wisdom of her personal experiences, are recorded in simple language and easy style.

Some disciples of Vengamamba pleaded with her that if she could make a compact work of yogic practices thus mentioned, it would be convenient to present them in assemblies. There is an important reason for this.

In Vengamamba's time, all the works were being recorded on palmyra leaves. Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam is a magnum opus spread to about one hundred and eighty such leaves. The eighty six prose and verse pieces do not extend to more than fifteen to sixteen palmyra leaves. So for those who want to comment upon yogic practices mentioned therein,



it would be a laborious task to open it every time one wants to comment upon the same by opening the narrative work of long palmyra leaves. So the disciples felt that if this could be made into a separate work it might be easier for it to be read and commented upon in various assemblies.

Vengamamba respected the wish of her disciples. She divided her work to make it perfect with a preface of six verses and a verse at the end revealing its benefit to the reader, gave it the meaningful title of “Astanga Yoga Saram” and gifted it to the literary world.

From this it is clear as to how Vengamamba’s works have acquired wide circulation and fame in her own lifetime.

### **Vengamamba’s Gift Deeds**

Vengamamba used to conduct festivities in connection with Narasimha Jayanthi in the month of Vaisakha in the holy place of Tirumala, to the delight of the people. During these festive days, food and water were being provided freely, besides other philanthropic gestures. There are more than thirty gift deeds written in palmyra leaves that detail the donations of land, money, rice and pulses by the zamindars, chieftains, landlords, the rich people, farmers and villagers among other devotees from Dindigal in the South to Golconda in the North. These gift deeds belong to a period of about thirty

years from A.D.1795 to A.D.1812. Here and there these gifts were being mentioned as “varshasanadaanapatrika manyapatram, dharmasasana danapatrika, sannadu”, the expressions being synonymous. The adjectives used in the gift deeds about Vengamamba reveal the respect of the people of her time showed to her, as in “To Matrusri Vengamamba whose mind is like a honey bee on the venerable lotus feet of Sri Tatigonda Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy in the presence of Sri Venkateswara Swamy, the Lord of all the worlds in the universe.”

What is remarkable about the gift deeds is the unanimity of resolution of many people living in the villages or towns, namely Reddies, Kammas, purohiths, businessmen, kapus, petty businessmen and those belonging to such communities. The rice, money and coins donated to Vengamamba’s math once a year having been donated from every house every month with “kulabadi” (castewise) and “perubadi” (namewise) were being utilized for providing food and shelter to pilgrims who used to visit Tirumala during Nrusimha Jayanthi festival.

In addition, there are also castewise gift deeds made by people of some communities in the villages and towns, for example, Reddis of Chittoor, Berisetlu of Tirupati, businessmen of Tirumala.

Though many people belonging to certain communities were illiterate, as per the perception of

the society of the present day, they were the ones who gave moral support to the philanthropic deeds of Vengamamba. Their gesture is highly praiseworthy.

As it has been mentioned at the end of these gift deeds, that if the charity mentioned there is interrupted by any, they would face the sin of killing a cow or a Brahmin in Kasi, or the sin of eating pork in Mecca, it is understandable that people of that time used to give their support to charities planned by Vengamamba irrespective of whether they be Hindus or Muslims.

The names of the donors, coins and some other details are helpful in investigating the social setting of the day.

On the whole, it is evident that even as early as the eighteenth century, there was a philosopher and literary artist with social awareness, Vengamamba who conducted donation of food successfully with the help of many devotees, the fact being evidenced by the gift deeds.

### **Jalakreedavilasam**

This yakshagana is the eighth one among Vengamamba's yakshaganas. It was written after Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam. Starting from Sri Krishna's birth to the water sports of gopikas, the infancy of Gopala has been described. The story has been taken from the tenth skhandha of Andhra Mahabagavatham of Potana.

The dexterous Vengamamba moulded the story to suit her plan of composition, adopting a naturally graceful style, in a living colloquial idiom full of vitality.

The episode of the birth of Sri Krishna in this work is a glowing illustration of “Kavita Saraswathi” Vengamamba’s splendid style.

This Jalakreeda yakshagana is an enthralling product and a gem of a work of Sahithi Brindavan, personally organized by Martrusri Vengamamba during the latter half of eighteenth century.

### **Mukhtikantha Vilasam**

The last among the yakshaganas of Tarigonda Vengamamba is Muktikanta Vilasam. From its name itself one can see that the subject of this is philosophical. The principal theme of this is the meeting of Jagadeeswara and Muktikanta. The subject of this work is Jagadeeswara entrusting his government to Tirumala Venkateswara Swamy living with Muktikanta on seven hills, Sri Venkateswara standing as representative of devotion and wisdom and protecting all kinds of devotees - the way all this is proved is without a parallel.

In particular the serious words spoken by Sri Srinivasa on Bhakthikanta are nicely illustrative of the great writer’s understanding born of her experience of Sri Venkateswara Swamy’s tatwa.

This has no parallel among the philosophical plays in Andhra yakshagana literature.

### **Vaasista Ramayana**

The last of Tarigonda Vengamamba's works is Vaasista Ramayanam. This is a dwipada work. The subject of this work is philosophy. The teacher of the people of Raghuvamsa, Vasista, inspired by Viswamitra, narrates many philosophical aspects to Sriramachandra in the form of several stories, elaborately. Having thus taught him, he dispels his doubts, completely.

The writer who is a great yogin takes up the broad details from Vaasista Ramayana, correlates them with her experience, and composes this work into five prakaranas freely and compactly in dwipadas.

On the whole, this proves that the dwipada form is more amenable than other forms of verse for preaching aspects of soul to common people.

### **Philosophical Hymns**

In addition to composing many works, Tarigonda Vengamamba used to sing many hymns and songs all through her life, composing them extemporarily on many occasions. What the present generation received from the lyrical compositions thus created by her is much less compared to her lyrics. Till yesterday many of her songs were known to the old people by heart.

As they reveal the nature of parabrahman they have been called hymns. All the philosophical hymns composed by her had the Tarigonda “mudra”. “Mudra” here means the constant practice of interpolating the name of the writer or the name of the favourite deity in its last line.

Vengamamba interpolated the name of her favourite deity Tarigonda Narasimhaswamy in all her lyrics. At the end of her songs, one can surely find words like “Tarigonda Narahari”, “Tarigondadhipudu”, “Tarigondapathi”.

In addition to these, there seem to be many slokas and verses by Vengamamba full of moral and devotional fervour extemporarily composed by her. But only a fragment of this wealth of spontaneous poetry is available to us, the present generation. The following verse from that collection is the gem of a verse that has come down to us.

In our world, it is difficult to be born a human,  
To be born a man is rare, getting a good wife,  
rarer.

Even then wealth may not grow.  
The wealthy may not be blessed with children.  
Though blessed with children, with them charity  
is a rarity.

The charitable ones may not be tolerant,

The tolerant may not speak the truth.

Only he is a good yogi, the one who thinks of  
Sri Hari.

The one who thinks of Hari is a great yogi.

O the lotus-eyed! Resident of Tarigonda!

Save me, the dweller of Venkatachala!

### **Mahasamadhi**

A four-pillar enclave in stone was constructed in accordance with Tarigonda Vengamamba's guidelines in the place where she used to go into a trance every day in the flower garden in Brindavan established by her.

As she was a great yogin endowed with spiritual wisdom, Vengamamba could foresee her final departure. She reached the Samadhi enclave chanting the name of Govinda at the destined time in the year Eswara by name. Having entered into a trance in lotus posture, she started reciting the eightlettered Narayana mantra, with purity of word, mind and deed.

On one side Vedic chants and on the other, recitation of Venkateswara, Vishnu, Narasimha Sahasra were reverberating loudly in that quiet atmosphere. With that sacred background, Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba roused the Serpent Power to traverse through the six lotus chakras, enhanced it in the Sahasrara, absorbed herself in nirvikalpa

Samadhi, split the brahmarandhra and became one with Sri Venkateswara, the form of paramatman in the shape of a blazing light.

Innumerable people like the Mahantha, officials of the temple, celebrities of the place, her disciples, both men and women, elders from Tarigonda, a group of saints who came there shouted jai jai, their shouts rending the sky.

The gods showered flowers in appreciation from the sky on her tomb, the context being Brahmavadini Tarigonda Vengamamba's travel to His abode.

Though they were struck with sorrow, her disciples closed her Samadhi, having placed aromatic objects in it, yielding incense and such like as they were directed to keep, with mantric chants.

Then groups of devotees and fakirs moved away, circumambulating the Samadhi, chanting jai, jai, to Venkata Ramana Swamy and Vengamamba.

### **Murtimatvam (Personality)**

“Murtimatvam” means personality. This will be in two forms, physical and spiritual. Between these two, the second one is very important. People of the world capable of great deeds acquire great fame in the world, owing to their special personality. Among such people the frontliners are the great poets!



Among the poets and poetesses who shone with a remarkable personality in the Telugu literary world Matrusri Vengamamba may be counted as one.

The first thing to be mentioned about her nature is humility. “O poets and scholars!” is the address with which she starts every work of hers in all humility and slowly enters into the story proper.

Like Prahlada, Vengamamba also assimilated the quintessence of education. She was a polyglot who continued to compose competently in Telugu and when it was required, in Sanskrit and Tamil as well. In the whole of Telugu literary history, she was the only great poetess who witnessed the Goddess of learning in the form of letters.

Matrusri Vengamamba was hailed as having the spark of Prahlada in her, matchless devotee of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy and a spiritualist, by Pushpagiri peethadhipathi Sri Vidya Narasimha Bharati in her infancy and later in her old age by Sringeri peethadhipathi Sri Satchidananda Bharati swamy-3.

Tirumala Srinivasa himself made her touch Sudarsana Chakra, with great affection! With this incomparable touch, all her faults both external and internal were washed away.

Her face was always lit up with a spiritual glow and an ineffable smile. The purity of her word and the effectiveness of her utterance sanctioned by the divine, every word that she composed weighing Siva

and Kesava in the same scale, was the offering of a basil leaf at the feet of “Tarigonda Seshakudardhyaksha.”

### **Annamayya-Vengamamba**

Leaving Tarigonda and going to Tirumala was an important episode in her life. Likewise her stay in the neighbourhood of Tallapaka’s house was an even more important event. As a result the poet was blessed with close acquaintance with the Tallapaka family and the writings of their ancestors who were known to be worshipping Sri Venkateswara with their divine chants for generations.

Vengamamba closely examined with curiosity the hymns full of philosophy and eroticism composed by Annamayya’s second son Peda Tirumalacharyulu, grandson Chinnatirumalaacaryulu as also another grandson Tiruvengalnadha’s dwipada works besides the marriage song Subhadrakalyanam by Timmakka (Tirumalamma), wife of Annamayya.

So she composed another wedding song Rama Parinayam in a similar style and dedicated it to the Lord. Many distinct similarities can be seen between the progenitor of Tallapaka dynasty, Annamacharya and Tarigonda Vengamamba in many aspects. The similarities are worth examining.

1. Both Annamacharya and Vengamamba are literary figures. They were born with blessings from Sri Venkateswara.

2. The wisdom of both is the blessing of the Lord.

3. Both were born as Nandavarikas.

4. Owing to some circumstances Annamayya left Tallapaka, his village for Tirumala in his boyhood itself. Vengamamba who was subjected to suffering while she was young, left Tarigonda and travelled alone to Tirumala.

5. Annamacharya was a great devotional poet and a staunch devotee of the Lord. Vengamamba was also a great devotee and devotional poet.

6. Annamayya worshipped Tirupati Venkateswara and Ahobala Narasimhadeva as being equal and even identical. Similarly Vengamamba worshipped Tarigonda Lakshmi Nrusimha and Tirumala Srinivasa as being the same and attained salvation.

7. Both of them lived through full moons, a thousand in all, meaning that they lived to see an age beyond eighty five.

8. Both have lived for a long time in sacred Tirumala, worshipping the Lord through their works and had their fulfillment there.

9. Annamayya wrote Srungara Manjari, a work in dwipadas. Vengamamba composed Srungaramanjari in Majari Dwipada. Vengamamba composed Venkateswara Manjari, a splendid work in the same metre.

10. Annamacharya wrote Venkatadri Mahatmyam, a work in Sanskrit. Vengamamba wrote Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam, a reputed Poetic work in Telugu.

11. Annamayya wrote Ramayana in dwipadas in Telugu. Vengamamba wrote Vasista Ramayana in Dwipada metre.

12. Following the prominent ones among Annamayya's spiritual hymns, Vengamamba composed songs and lyrics in her yakshaganas.

13. Both faced many trials and tribulations with courage with the help of their staunch devotion and fulfilled their lives.

14. In her Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam, a poetic work, Vengamamba, while praising ancient poets, in a poem which begins with an allusion to the first among poets, Valmiki, showers her praises especially on Annamacharya describing him as the blessed one, Varalabhda. None other than Vengamamba did ever mention Annamacharya as a great poet. It means that the only great poetess who recognized him as a great poet was Vengamamba.

15. The last among the services to the Lord in Tirumala is ekanta seva. During this service, Annamayya began the tradition of singing a lullaby to the Lord, to put him to sleep. Three hundred years later, Vengamamba started Mutyala haarathi with camphor, along with this service or seva.

In the Tirumala shrine, at the time of the last service, two offerings are made at the same time resulting in the popular saying, “The lullaby of Tallapaka and the haarathi song of Tarigonda”.

16. Like the alwars, Annamayya worshipped the Lord with devotion like that of a damsel in love, with madhura bhakthi and attained salvation. As Vengamamba was a woman by birth, she worshipped the Lord with the love of a heroine and reached the divine abode. The name of her husband and the Lord’s name being one has helped her immensely in her sacred feeling of love.

17. Both of them were noble souls who were blessed by the Lord having chanted the same Narasimha Mantra and attained fulfillment. The Narasimha mantra chanted by them is given below:

**Ugram veeram Mahavishnum jwalantam  
sarvatomukham**

**Narasimham bheeshanam bhadram  
mrutyormrutyur namamyaham**

Annamacharya composed thirty two thousand hymns inspired by the chant of the thirty two letter mantra. Similarly Matrusri Vengamamba composed eighteen works besides innumerable hymns, slokas, poems and songs, all of them spontaneously and attained fame!

18. Venkateswara recalled both of them born of His boon even while they were young. Later he

granted them the boon of serving his presence and granted them salvation at an appropriate juncture in a manner, hitherto unprecedented.

### **Mirabai-Vengamamba**

As in the life of men devotees, there was a similarity in the lives of women devotees as well and this is only natural. It is worth examining here the similarities between the two literary and philosophical figures.

1. From the age of five, the devotion of Sri Krishna grew up with Mirabai. Similarly devotion for Sri Krishna developed in Vengamamba from her infancy.

2. Many of their contemporaries used to mistake the intensity and acts of their devotion for a kind of madness.

3. Mirabai pleaded with her mother that her marriage was fixed with Giridhargopala, that at dawn she dreamt of her wedding with God and hence she did not need marriage with any man. Vengamamba also pleaded with her parents that Venkateswara was her husband and that they should not think of her marriage with any man.

4. Both got married under pressure from their elders. After the death of their husbands, a sense of resignation instead of sorrow, increased in the lives of both.

5. Mirabai, a Rajput woman, faced many trials and tribulations from her husband's side. She could

stand her ground, thanks to her favourite God Lakshmi Narasimhaswamy. Even Vengamamba could face the difficulties placed in her way by the orthodox people of Tarigonda, thanks to her favourite deity Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy.

6. Both of them did not compose for fame or earthly glory. Through amorous spiritualism, they got the blessings of their favourite gods and thereby they wanted to attain salvation, their main target.

7. Both of them exhibited their humility appropriate to the context, on various occasions.

8. Both of them could transfer their favourite gods to the places where they were staying.

9. Meerabai the woman devotee went to Dwaraka famed to be a city of salvation, Mokshapuri and there she became one with God Sri Krishna in his temple. Similarly Vengamamba united with Srinivasa of Tirumala, reputed to be the Vaikunta of Kali epoch by virtue of a yogic trance. In view of these similarities, Vengamamba came to be considered a Telugu Meera by the researchers.

### **Vengamamba-Malayalaswamy**

Sri Malayala Swamy's name as a renunciant was Asangananda Yateendra. As he hailed from Kerala, he was being called Malayala Swamy. Gradually the name gained permanence.

Swamiji visited the pilgrim centre in 1913. It was a hundred years by that time of Vengamamba's

death. At that time, in the math established by Vengamamba and in Brindavan, the line of disciples of Vengamamba, used to be there. They could graphically describe the events of Tarigonda Vengamamba's life, details of her miracles, her spiritual discourses and other aspects.

At that time in addition to the above, many of those who heard about her from their elders, and those who saw her in her infancy, used to live in Tirumala. Sri Swamiji, who was endowed with spiritual wisdom, could learn elaborately from the inhabitants of Tirumala about the great yogin Vengamamba.

Sri Malayala Swamiji performed his penance for some time in Tumburukona where Vengamamba did her penance. He describes his experiences of the divine he had, thus:

Of all the above holy places, Tumburuteertha and the cave where Vengamamba lived are very eminent. Not only that. Sri Tarigonda Vengamamba witnessed Him there, fully. The divine bliss on me seen today is a result of my contemplation of the divine there. The mind's absorption in the divine, the steadfast attention to Turiya, and the explicit flowering of unworldly wisdom took place (Balayogini, pp.376-377).

One day when Swamiji was to perform penance, he affectionately read about and remembered the career of Vengamamba again and again. Then like a



personification of the goddess Ganges with a white veil, Vengamamba appeared before him in her celestial form! (Even by the time Swamiji went to Tirumala, it is said that “Sri Tarigonda Vengamamba Charitramu” by Sri Ranga Prakasha Das was printed and was in circulation).

Having manifested herself before him in that form, it appears, she was supposed to have said, “My child, I am pleased with your noble intent.” Having recognized her as Tarigonda Vengamamba, Swamiji prostrated himself before her, devoutly. It is said that she blessed him with all her heart! (The appearance of Vengamamba to Malayala Swami is to be seen on p.116 of Naru Naganarya Kavi’s Malayala Charitram).

In a work by name “Sushka Vedantha Tamo Bhaskaramu” written in 1919, Sri Swamiji, proving the competence of women to attain the wisdom of the divine, mentioned Devahoothi, Chudala, Madalasa and such realized women and added, “why should we go that far? Is it possible to measure the greatness of our mahayogin Sri Tarigonda Vengamamba?” (p.18).

So saying, he confirmed that Vengamamba belonged to the realized women of ancient times.

Elsewhere Sri Swami mentioned Vengamamba as a sage who attained “Jeevanmukti” (Balayogini, p.326). If we examine a work, ‘Balayogini’ by Swamiji, we will come to know that there were some devout women who used to indulge in meditation

and other kinds of sadhana and that they had great reverence for Sri Malayala Swamiji.

In one word, one may say the sacred place Tirumala helped Vengamamba's penance to become fruitful. In a similar fashion, her penance served in enhancing the power of the sacred place. Tallapaka Annamacharyulu, Haatheeram Baalaji, Tarigonda Vengamamba-all these spiritual personalities proved themselves as the tallest among the noble souls, then or now!

### **Works of Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba**

#### **a. Works in Tarigonda**

1. Tarigonda Nrusimha Satakam (Satakam in  
verse)
2. Narasimha Vilasa Katha (Yakshaganam)
3. Siva Natakam (Yakshaganam)
4. Rajayogamrutasaram (a work in Dwipada  
metre)
5. Balakrishna Natakam (Yakshaganam)

#### **b. Works in Tirumala**

1. Vishnuparijatham (Yakshaganam)
2. Ramaparinayam (Marriage song in Dwipada  
metre)
3. Chenchu Natakam (Yakshaganam)
4. Sri Venkateswara Krishnamanjari (a beautiful  
hymn composed in Manjari Dwipada)
5. Sri Rukmini Natakam (Yakshaganam)

6. Gopikanatakam (Gollakalapam)  
(Yakshaganam)
7. Sri Bhagavatham (Dwipada Kavyam)
8. Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam (a poetic work  
in six cantos)
9. Astangayoga saram (a poetical work)
10. Jalakreedavilasam (Yakshaganam)
11. Muktikantavilasmu (Yakshaganam)
12. Tatwakeertanalu (Spiritual hymns)\*
13. Vaasista Ramayanam

**1. Prayer to Gananayaka  
(Jalakreeda Vilasamu)**

Gana nayaka! Save us Gananayaka! Save us  
Gananayaka! Save us Gananayaka! //Refrain//  
Blessed son of Shiva! Glowing like cit  
embodied!  
Rule us! Sri Gananayaka! //Gananayaka// 1  
Destroyer of worldly ills! Dweller of devotees'  
minds!  
Bliss-giver of poets! Gananayaka!  
//Gananayaka// 2

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\* (The great poetess extemporarily composed in various contexts in her life, hymns, slokas, verses full of devotion and philosophy in Tarigonda as well as Tirumala ever since Goddess Saraswathi appeared to her in the form of letters. Only a few of these among the hundreds of her extemporary compositions survive to date).

Lord of sages! Mouse-charioted!  
 An offspring of noble qualities! Gananayaka!  
 //Gananayaka// 3

Deep like the ocean! Known by the Vedas!  
 Progenitor of universe! Gananayaka!  
 //Gananayaka// 4

Please be with us who believe in you!  
 Lend your glow to us, believers!  
 //Gananayaka// 5

Dispel the three prime constraints of life!  
 Help us, save us Sri Gananayaka!  
 //Gananayaka// 6

Hesitate not to wipe out obstacle makers  
 And keep me filled with divine glow!  
 //Gananayaka// 7

Surely you are the son of Gouri,  
 Sister to Tarigonda Hari! Sri Gananayaka!  
 //Gananayaka// 8

## **2. Prayer to the favourite god (Jalakreeda Vilasam)**

O, the son of Nanda! I salute you again and  
 again  
 O, the blissful one! I salute you again and again  
 O, the son of Nanda! I salute you again and  
 again. (Refrain)

Narayana! Fullmoon-faced  
 Madhava! I salute you again and again

Praised by Narada, Sanaka, sanandana  
O thou lotus-eyed, I salute thee again and again.  
//Nanda// 1

Ferocious in war! Promoter of good people!  
O immaculate one! I salute you again and again!  
O cute-limbed! O the dispassionate one!  
O promoter of the humble ones! I salute you  
again and again! //Nanda// 2

Noble dweller of Tarigonda! O paramatman!  
O man-lion! I salute thee again and again.  
Deity of Seshadri! Adored by many!  
I salute thee again and again. //Nanda// 3

### **3. Prayer to favourite God (Sivanatakam)**

To the chit-shaped one, victory! To one with  
gods as family, victory!  
To one who lifted Phalguna, victory! To one free  
from sin, victory!  
To one who saves us from sin, victory! To cupid-  
killer, Victory!  
To the spouse of Ganges, victory! To the  
embodiment of good, victory! //Victory!// 1  
To the prop of the distressed, victory! To one  
deep as sindhu, victory!  
To one whose valour is as tall as Meru, victory!  
To the serpent-necklaced, victory! To the  
diamond-crowned, victory!

To one full of mercy, victory! To the indweller  
of vedas, //Victory!// 2

To the truthful one, victory! To the friend of  
good sages, victory!

To friend of Muranthaka, victory! To the divine-  
bodied, victory!

To the ever-sacred, victory! To one deserving  
Indra's praise, victory!

To the forehead-eyed, victory! To the five-faced  
one, victory //Victory!// 3

#### **4. Darshan of Rama and Lakshmana**

(The lyric composed by Vengamamba,  
extemporarily with devotional ecstasy when she was  
going from Tumburukona to Tirumala)

Rama and Lakshmana the merciful saved me.  
(Refrain)

On the way on my return from the vast  
Tumburukona

They are verily the embodiment of mercy.

On either side of me walking in front.  
//Karuna// 1

Showing mercy in their eyes

Not giving scope for fear

In my mind

From thieves and animals wild. //Karuna// 2

Glittering in style with  
Gold and diamond crowns on head,  
With fine bodies in black  
They are verily the embodiment of mercy.  
//Karuna// 3

Not forgetting their fame  
As saviours of the distressed  
Fear not, so saying they tell me not to hurry,  
Not giving scope to fear from thieves and  
animals wild. //Karuna// 4

As the mercy of the Lord of Venkatagiri  
None other than Tarigonda Nrusimha  
Spreads as if his duty it is  
To protect those who surrender. //Karuna// 5

### **5. Prayer**

(A lyric extemporarily composed by  
Vengamamba going to Tumburukona, asking for  
permission from the Lord Srinivasa).

Oh Lord Srinivasa! Direct me!  
Save me in more ways than one! (Refrain)  
Paramatman,  
Be not angry with me  
That I take liberty with You;  
I have a mind to return. //Srinivasa// 1

I have to read Bhagavatham fully,  
 Quickfy will I retum here.  
 Like a shadow, You have to follow  
 Me, to this place. //Srinivasa// 2

Obliged I am to stay at the Place  
 Place where you intend to stay.  
 So, Oh God! How can my will be done?  
 Oh Govinda! Oh Krishna! Oh Tarigonda  
 Nrusimha! //Srinivasa// 3

### **6. A Spiritual Hymn**

Be it Shiva, be it Kesava, does it matter?  
 Does their mindset differ? //Refrain//  
 Why to fall a prey to Cupid's illusions?  
 Why this split if one is discreet?  
 //Be it Shiva// 2

They don't know the body is like snow.  
 They become vain in dalliance with cute damsels.  
 //Be it Shiva// 3

They can't see what is good, what is bad.  
 They revel, slaves of five senses.  
 //Be it Shiva// 4

Mahadeva became Atchyuta,  
 Sri MahaVishnu took Shiva's form.  
 //Be it Shiva// 5



This great truth became eternal.

Shiva assumed the name, Narasimha.

//Be it Shiva// 6

Desires do not die, tolerance is missing;

People struggle, without direction.

//Be it Shiva// 7

Swami became Sri Tarigonda Narahari.

The dweller of Samadri became Shiva, Sambhu.

//Be it Shiva// 8

### **7. The Surrender of Gopikas (BalaKrishna Natakamu)**

Save us, save us, save us, save us,

Save us, save us, save us, save us. //Refrain//

Save us, save us, oh Lord of the three worlds!

Save us, the arrow of purahara!

Save us, oh giver of salvation!

Save us, oh helper of devotees! //Save us// 1

Save us, oh the butterfly of the lotus-minds of  
yogis! save us, save us, Chidambara!

Save us, clothed in a splendid dress of gold!

Save us, o the illusion-sporting! //Save us// 2

Save us, deity of Tarigonda!

Save us, wearing Sri Vatsa and Lakshmi

Save us, alluring God of charm divine!

//Save us// 3

### **8. Lullaby (Jalakreedavilasam)**

Laaly, oh cute child!-Laaly, Gopala!  
 Laaly, oh golden-clothed, with tender qualities!  
//Laaly// 1

O the spotless one! Promoter of Yadava clan!  
 Bliss-giver to poet groups! Dipeller of Kali's  
mischievous! //Laaly// 2

Son of Nanda! Ever blissful! Govinda!  
 Cute lotus-faced! Mukunda! //Laaly// 3

Blissful one, Cit-shaped! Deep as the ocean!  
 Decked with matchless qualities, enveloping the  
Vedas. //Laaly// 4

A name praised by Parvathi, a wish-fulfiller of  
all desires

Blue-black like the ocean! A doyen of gods!  
THE //Laaly// 5

Dweller of Tarigonda! Shining like Raama!  
 Sporting a cute smile all the while! Sri Srinivasa!  
//Laaly// 6

### **9. Mutyalahaarathi song**

(The song of victory and bliss used to be sung  
 by the devotional poetess to Lord  
 Venkateswaraswamy temple at Tirumala at the time  
 of ekantha seva, while offering haarathi).

To the Lord of Pannagadri,  
The Sun dispelling the gloom of great sins,  
To Alamelmanga, the Lord's inseparable consort  
Alamelu Manga who sustains us.

Victory and bliss, eternal bliss and victory  
Victory and bliss, eternal bliss and victory!  
//Victory and bliss// 1

To parabrahman who bears the title of  
Bliss-giver to those who seek refuge.  
Remind your Lord unfailingly  
Not to forget his permanent title.

//Victory and bliss// 2

To Him who lives forever in the house of bliss  
The God who saves the distressed  
To Alamelmanga who adores the Lord  
Felicitating him with gifts galore.

//Victory and bliss// 3

The Lord whose habit  
It is, to bless the humans.  
To the ocean's daughter ready to shower wealth,  
On her spouse's chest, residing.

//Victory and bliss// 4

Bring promised offerings, He says wisely  
Atchyuta, wrests them with compulsion,

To the great mother who makes people cook  
And offers them first to God.

//Victory and bliss// 5

And to fantastic temple enclaves

To temple streets, holy waters,

To the compounds and gopuras

To the ancient golden pinnacles

//Victory and bliss// 6

To choultries countless,

To the groups of garlands full of fruits

And flowers fanning love,

To splendid storehouses, to exchequers,

To well-filled kitchens //Victory and bliss// 7

To Garuda and other vehicles

To festoons crocodile-shaped

To many kinds of dhwajas, to reverberating  
instruments of music,

To marriage halls, traditionally kept.

//Victory and bliss// 8

To weapons like the disc,

To groups of gem-studded jewels

To big collections of glittering garments

To the splendid divine form

With limbs like hands and feet

//Victory and bliss// 9

To blissful attributes like supernal wisdom,  
To the competence born of strength,  
To all the loving attendant gods,  
To attendants serving actively.  
//Victory and bliss// 10

To brahmotsavas always glorious  
To festivals perennially held  
To inspiring roots of the worlds, rule  
To blessed planes glittering  
//Victory and bliss// 11

To Srinivasa who becomes Tarigonda Narahari,  
Showering boons on all,  
To Seshadri, bearing the Lord of the universe  
And blooming in wealth.  
//Victory and bliss// 12

**Seven Poems on Tarigonda Vengamamba**

The damsel born of Venkateswara's boon is  
great  
Of sterling character, a great yogin, moulded by  
yogic meditation  
Of Tarigonda Narasimha. The goddess of letters  
emerging in  
In a splendid form to her, hitherto unknown.  
A woman, not tainted by sin, Pleasing

Sripathi with writings eighteen, a famed  
Crest jewel of poets with great devotion,  
Gave a poetic form to the glory of miracles of  
Venkatachala, dedicating it to Andhrabharathi  
In a manner not Present earlier.  
Some mocked her poetry cruelly, as nonsense.  
She heeded not, with the power of her will,  
Not afraid, the sacred chant of Narasimha  
Aiding her, all the while  
Did indite poetic works, undauntedly,  
An abode of yakshaganas, satakas,  
compositions extempore,  
Works in dwipada, spiritual ballads  
Folk songs and such like sweet songs  
A born poetess Vengama got glory.  
She showed power of Penance  
Establishing a divine ashram in  
The sacred Place, Tirumala.  
Annamacharya has to get His blessings  
So saying with adoration  
She praised Annmacharya and the line of  
Poets; founding Astaghantas she  
Provided literary fruits; the blessed daughter of

Venkateswara, witnessed a thousand full moons,  
Serving Srinivasa, got good fame.  
The aphorism, “Tallapakalali, Tarigonda haarathi”  
Was born uniquely, the first half suits  
Annamayya,

The other, Vengamamba.  
The doyen of wisdom, a noble woman  
A spiritual soul of noble behavior  
Blessed by Pushpagiri Sankaracharya  
Pujiyapada Srungagiri Sankarachaya Sri  
Charana.

A born scholar with Potana’s skill ful style,  
Annamacharya’s spiritual glory,  
The woman devotee’s passionate musical style,  
All in one is Tarigonda Vengamamba.

*Sriyah kaantaya kalyaana nidhaye*  
*Nidhayerthinaam!*  
*Sri Venkatanivaasaaya Sreenivaasaaya*  
*Mangalam!!*



