

ANANDA NILAYAM

English Translation

Prof. B. Parvathi

Telugu Original

Julakanti Balasubrahmanyam



**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati.
2025**

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FOREWORD

Tirumala is a divine place in the worlds renowned. In this holiest of holy places, Sriman Narayana is worshiped as Sri Venkateswara. About five thousand years ago, at the beginning of Kali yuga, Sri Maha Vishnu with Sri Maha Lakshmi - ever seated in his bosom adorning it - came down from Vaikuntha to holy Tirumala, which is the very Vaikuntha on the earth. He has manifested himself here in the form of Salagrama Sila. Here he is worshiped as "Srinivasa."

From then onwards, "Srinivasa" — Lord Sri Venkateswara, renowned as Kalau Venkata Nayakaha, which means that in Kali yuga, Venkata Nayaka alone takes care of all his devotees in all ways. It is for this reason that this deity is glorified by the devotees as a saviour of the distressed, the lord of salutations galore, and the bestower of all wishes.

The Tirumala range consists of seven hills named Seshadri, Garudadri, Venkatadri, Narayananadri, Vrishabhadri, Vrishadri and Anjanadri. For this reason, Srinivasa is hailed variously as the Lord of the Seven Hills, the Lord of the Sesha Hill, the Lord who dispels sins and by many other names as well.

Swami Sri Venkateswara, who is totally committed to the sole purpose of doing good to his devotees and for the well-being of the world, vowed that he would rather be away from Vaikuntha than in

no way leave his helpless devotees. He, who is the deity and emperor of the eternally auspicious, has descended to the earth to shower his blessings on devotees every day.

His Name traverses the world. Worshiped by his umpteen number of names unique to him alone, his divine story is penned by many in several forms.

The present book entitled Ananda Nilayam is the divine story of Sri Venkateswara Swamy. Prof B. Parvathy, a renowned scholar, has translated Sri Julakanti Balasubramanyam's (Rtd. Editor at TTD and Renowned Writer). Original Telugu work by Ananda Nilayam 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 praise Prof. B. Parvathy for successfully accomplishing this task.

In the Service of Lord Venkateswara



Executive Officer,

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,
Tirupati.

PREFACE

There It is Ho!
The Abode of Joy!

The Lord of Tirumala is hailed by innumerable names, yet the one name which stands significant in letter and spirit is the name of “Ananda Nilaya”, the Dweller of the House of Joy! Pilgrimage to Tirumala is a joy! To traverse these hills gives immense joy! A full view of the tower of his golden dwelling “Ananda Nilayam” is a matter of divine joy! Having a glimpse of the Lord of Seven Hills who stands in waiting eternally for his devotees embodies supreme joy! Every devotee experiences this inexpressible sequence of joys each time they make the visit. It is not merely for the devotees coming on pilgrimage, but also the temple staff, TTD employees and for the *archaka swamis* in the temple, who are forever engaged in decorating and making offerings to the deity—all of them experience this feeling of joy! This is the living truth of everyday.

It is for this reason that in order to feel and experience this endless sea of joy and to lap up with both their palms mouthfuls of the nectar of joy to their hearts’ content that devotees as per their ability keep coming to Tirumala on pilgrimage. The experiences of each are specially their own in this pilgrimage! Every person’s joy is their own. Each one worships the god in their own way. Yet the meeting point of all minds, thoughts and experiences—the source of all joys is but One! and

that One is none but the Lord of Tirumala Swami Sri Venkateswara.

The hill named Venkatadri, famously known as Anandachalam,’ immerses each devotee in a sea of joy with everystep they take. The golden tower of the temple is called *Ananda Nilaya Vimanam* and the manifest deity is *Ananda Nilayudu* — ” Dweller of the House of Joy”

*aaananda janakatvattam
aananda nilayam viduhu
vara padmaasane susthaam
vidhaaya kamalaalayam*

As Sri Maha Lakshmi the lotus seated adorns his bosom, the very dweller of Vaikuntha has come down to make Tirumala his abode - this Vaikuntha on earth, the divine place which gives an inexpressible joy at the very first sight. Hence it has become renowned as Ananda Nilayam. More over.

*vimaanam sarvapaapghnam
vishnuaadhishtitam saha
pasyataam sarva bhutaanaam
aahlaada janakam subham*

After taking a view of the golden tower, as one sets eyes on the deity Srinivasa, the sins of all beings are cast away! A glimpse of His auspicious form brings joy.

The originator of Telugu lyrical poetry namely Tallapaka Annamacharya — the one who was born with an element of Sri Swami’s sword named Nandaka — extols the excellent fruits gleaned from

a glance of the Ananda Nilaya temple tower in the following lyric:

*inchukaina venkatesu giri sikharamu
 kaanchute kalugavale gaakaa
 anchitambaina nityaananda padavulunu
 minchi tama edute prabhavinchinavi kaavaa!*

And also

*korina vaariki korina varamula
 nuuranta produla nosaguchu
 cheruvayai kripachese nidivo
 kuurimi naa naduma ‘gopura meda’*

The mere sight of the scintillating golden tower amidst the Tirumala peaks grants all desired wishes! sang Annamayya joyfully aloud.

This holy place Venkatachalam through all the ages, forever drawing devotees ceaselessly has been granting their wishes in all ways to all the multitudes, granting joys of a wondrous nature.

*ade venkataachala makhilonnatamu
 adivo brahmaadula kapuruupamu
 adivo nitya nivaasa makhila munulaku
 nade chudu dade mrokku daanandamayamu*

Thus, on the famed hill of joy, dwelling with in the tower of joy, as the deity of joy, the Saga of Swami Sri Venkateswara, is explained in this simple and beautiful book “Ananda Nilayam”.

In addition to the holy life stories of great devotees like the king named Sankhana, of a man called Atma Rama, of a Dharma Gupta, of a brahman

named Sumati, of a Tondaman, of a potter Nambi, adorable stories about the Seven Hills, the holy streams in the hills, the formal observances that must be followed by devotees as they proceed to this holy place on a pilgrimage, ritualistic offerings to be made for their forefathers...and many more wonderful things are explained here in this book. There is no doubt at all that all these aspects will interest the devotees. To say that reading about these will make them tread the path to the mountain peaks of eternal joys is no exaggeration at all.

The reason is this!

This verbal “Ananda Nilayam” is an auspicious gift of the Dweller of Ananada Nilayam to his devotees!

Hence, why delay any further?

May all read this book named “Ananda Nilayam” in any manner they wish, in any way they like! Read it with devotion!! Make others also read the book!!!

Draw complete blessings of the Deity dwelling in his Abode of Joy and derive in abundance the pleasures of life there and here after too and fill your lives with joy!

*Aanadanilaye sriimad vimaane
swarnabhuushite*
*Sarvamangala maangalye diivyate
nityamangalam*

This book has...

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* * *

ANANDA NILAYAM

Tirumala is a holy place of world renown. Swami Sri Venkateswara is the deity manifest here in this divine place. Devotees come from all corners of the world to have a darshan of the God. They come with a fondness, ardour and joy in their hearts, calling him as The One of Seven Hills, the Lord of Tirumala, Tirumalesa, Srinivasa, The One to whom devotees offer obeisance at each step, the god who relieves their difficulties when vowed to, the giver of desired boons, as The One who pays interest on his loan and by several other names in this way. They give devotional offerings. They offer several varieties of food. They celebrate many festivals in His name.

The deity, so easy to please, grants the wishes of his devotees who serve him with all their heart, word and work, in no time at all. Sri Tirumalesa has granted limbs to many, has given sight to many, he cured innumerable hunger pangs, granted progeny to many, given speech to many, and he also makes possible for some others to fulfill the promises they made to him. He does not show any distinction in granting people their wishes. No one is too big or too small to him. Man or woman makes no difference to him. The lame, blind, deaf or dumb are in no way overlooked. Class, creed, religion, colour—there is no discrimination here at all. And least of all is the linguistic barrier. From where did this King of Hills, the great lover of his devotees, come from? At what

time did he arrive? What is the saga of this deity? Was there any one here at all before he manifested himself here and made Tirumala his home? To such battery of your doubts and questions, this **Ananda Nilayam** provides the right answers. Please do read it! Make your dear ones read it!! And together derive joy and be happy!!!

Satra Yaga

Once upon a time Saunaka and all other ascetics gathered in the Naimisha forest. Desirous of the removal of all difficulties for mankind, for the continued peace and comfort of people and thereby the welfare of the world they began to perform a twelve year long great *yagjna* called *Satra Yaga* in that sacred place. In the leisure time after the proceedings of the day were over, they used to spend time well listening to the *puranas*, about holy stories, significance of holy *tirthas*, and the power of *kshetras* which the famous sage Suta-the dear disciple of sage Veda Vyasa-narrated to them.

Those ascetics, the *rishis* one day addressed him thus:

“O’ the noble minded, Suta! *mahasaya*! The stories you have been telling us are very nice and also very interesting. But now a doubt has risen in our minds.

It is as thus: it is said that Sriman Narayana, manifest in a hundred and eight holy places on this

earth, is worshipped in those places. Are not all those holy places known famously as *Divya Tirupatis*! Isn't it also known that Sri Maha Vishnu is self-manifest in eight holy places namely Sri Rangam, Sri Mushnam, Salagramam, Totadri, Naimisharanya, Badarika *asrama*, Kanchipuram, and Venkatachalam and that he is as well, worshipped in these places and he also fulfills the desires of his devotees?

But which one among these is the place most liked by Sri Hari? Where is this place? We are very desirous of knowing about the special nature and the eminence of that holy place. Please narrate the greatness of that place to us in detail." So they requested.

Suta was very happy when the sages with a lot of enthusiasm addressed him with these questions. Eyes half closed he went into an inexplicable state of divine experience. He came back to normal state after a while.

"O'great souls! you who are endowed with the wealth called *tapas*! You have asked some very relevant questions. You are truly desirous and interested in clearing your doubts. Next to Vaikuntha the place which Sri Maha Vishnu likes most is the holy place called Venkatachala, where he likes most to move about in his human - *leela manusha* - form on this earth. The power and fame of this place are not of today, nor of these times. From the age of

the Great White Boar - *Sweta Varaha kalpa* Sri Maha Vishnu has been moving about at will in his play in human form. The supreme god, self manifest as an idol of a *salagrama* known by the name as Venkateswara, appearing to devotees for worship in all the splendour and beauty of his form, granting them all their wishes, is therefore famed as *Kalau Venkata Nayakaha* - **The One** for this age of Kali.

Divine beings such as Indra, Brahma and others, the reigning deities of all sides-*dikpalakas* such as Isan, even the thousand hooded Adi Sesha and the rest can hardly adequately or completely describe His divine actions! It is somewhat doubtful if even to some extent they have understood his *leelas*! Hence, what can I, who am a mere mortal, say? In spite of it as per your wish, due to the infinite grace of my great teacher the sage Veda Vyasa, I shall try to narrate the magic of this mountain called Venkata, the divine play of Swami Sri Venkateswara, his fondness for his devotees and his full kindness as per my ability. All of you listen carefully with attention and devotion.

Listening to the story will bring to me - the narrator, and to you - the listeners all auspicious things. In addition it will also give a divine feeling of actually going on a pilgrimage to this holy hill. In this way, may we invoke the blessings of the Lord of the Seven Hills!" Saying so sage Suta began his narration thus.

Manifestation of Swami Adi Varaha

“Once upon a time in the Milky Ocean, from the navel of Sri Maha Vishnu reclining on the great serpent Sesha, came up a golden lotus shining with wondrous splendours. Hence Hari came to be called as ‘Padmanabha’.

From this lotus was born the Four Faced Brahma. Lord Vishnu, looking at Brahma born of the lotus in his navel, ordered him to take up the work of creating all the worlds. On his father’s command as Brahma created the worlds, Vishnu began to nourish them. Some time went on in this fashion. Does time halt even for a second for any one? No, it does not!

According to earthly human time, Krita, Treta, Dwapara and Kali together are known as one *Mahayuga*. Such collection of a thousand *Mahayugas* makes half a day i.e. one waking time for Brahma. The night time was also of equal duration. Immersed in his creative function without a moment of leisure, the very tired Brahma felt extremely sleepy. He wished to rest for a while. Meanwhile, as he fell asleep the creative process went berserk and astray. The sun and moon left their courses. Clouds poured down incessant torrential rains. The world was submerged in water—*jala pralaya* ensued. In that vast expanse of water the earth had sunk.

At this time a demon named Hiranyaaksha took the earth to the nether world *patala* and played havoc with it. Thus, as a thousand *yuga* period lapsed, Brahma woke up as it was day time again. By then as Sri Maha Vishnu, who took the form of a Great White Boar, was retrieving the earth submerged in water, Hiranyaksha resisted. Lord Sweta Varaha killed him and lifted the earth on his tusks as deities sounded *dundubhis* and showered a rain of flowers on him.

As earlier Sri Maha Vishnu ordered Brahma to recommence his work of creation and sent all the deities to their respective places. Then Swami Adi Varaha addressed Garuda who stood in devotion by his side thus:

“O’ King of Birds! I lifted up the earth from this destructive deluge in my form as a Boar. The earth goddess chose me as her lord. I too agreed. When I enter Vaikuntha in this unruly form Goddess Lakshmi might be frightened, or she might also make fun of me. Moreover, it is also my responsibility to remain here to protect the earth carefully for some time. Hence, you fly back to Vaikuntha. Fetch the Hill of my Sport-*Kridachala*!” Ordering Garuda thus Maha Vishnu chose an auspicious place to the north on the bank of holy river Suvarnamukhari for placing his Hill of Sport.

Ordered by the Lord thus, the king among birds flew to Vaikuntha, communicated these happenings

in detail to Goddess Lakshmi and said that he has to take the hill to earth. The Goddess too decided to join her lord. She preserved her pristine form in Vaikuntha and set forth carrying only one aspect of her Divine Self with her to earth. Carrying the goddess and the rest of Lord Vishnu's retinue on Kridadri Garuda reached the earth. He installed the hill in the auspicious place to the north on the bank of holy river Suvarnamukhari shown by his Lord.

Lord Sweta Varaha along with Goddess Earth Bhu Devi stood on the hill that Garuda fetched from Vaikuntha and placed on the western bank of Swami Pushkarini. Then, Brahma, Indra and all the deities too came, greatly praising they raised their hands in salutations to Him and his exploits in killing the demon Hiranyaksha and for saving the earth in the radiant wondrous form of Adi Varaha.

“O’ Lord! Swami in the form of Adi Varaha! Sri Hari! Our infinite number of salutations to you. This form of yours is not only surprising and wonderful, it is also very fearsome. We pray to you to diminish your fiery form with both the goddesses Lakshmi and Bhu by your side, to assume a great benign aspect in this very form of the Swetha Varaha for devotees of all worlds, grant happiness to us by your appearance. Also make your divine actions widely known.” They made their submission in all humility and prayed to him.

Pleased by their prayers the God spoke thus.

“It is with a great intent that I, the slayer of Hiranyaksha, have willed to be here in this place. Following my wish you have made your prayers accordingly. I shall give *darsan* and grant to devotees their wishes as the goddess Lakshmi adorns my bosom.”

So saying assuming a benign form with Goddess Bhu Devi by his side he entered a shining divine golden towered abode on the western side of the Pushkarini. All the deities adored Him, sang in praise of him in several ways. Then as they watched the divine tower-*vimana* disappeared. The deities were surprised at this divine play of the God, and kept looking wide eyed in the direction of the tower as it disappeared in the sky, and praising his glory left for their respective worlds. Then Varaha Swami spoke thus to Devi Lakshmi.

“Lakshmi! I thought that my uncouth form would frighten you and so I did not come to Vaikuntha. But you yourself have come to me with all our family. It made me very happy.”

Then the Goddess pleaded with him thus: “My Lord! Where ever you are there will I be. My world is being with you. Can I leave you for a moment at least? That is the reason for my being here with all our retinue. Please forgive me.”

“Devi! I have come to be on earth in order to save good men from the atrocious deeds of evil doers. This earth is even a better place than

Vaikuntha,” saying thus the God embraced Goddess Adi Lakshmi and placed her in his bosom.

From then on wards the Lord with Sri and Bhu Devis by his side appeared to devotees in his benign form when needed, and at other times went about on the hill-*Kridachala* in his sporting human form.” As Suta explained this to Saunaka and other sages they once again expressed their doubts in this way.

“O great sage! You said that the Swami stood on the hill in the gorgeous towered temple in the auspicious place to the west of Swami Pushkarini, isn’t it so? Why did the Swami choose that particular place? Is there any special reason for that? You said that it is Swami Pushkarini. Why is that pond called as Swami Pushkarini? What are the powers - *mahimas* of that *pushkarini*? Please let these be known to us in detail,” they requested Suta.

Suta nodded his head in agreement and began to speak.

Swami Pushkarini

“*Kridaa Vapi* in Vaikuntha-Well of Play itself is this Swami Pushkarini. On His command Garutman has brought the Well along with the Hill and placed it here.

The dweller of Vaikuntha with the Devis Sri and Bhu by his side, as he played about in its waters, this has come to be as well famed as the holy river Viraja. In addition, it is even more glorious than rivers

such as the Ganga. It is the holiest of holy places capable of cleansing all the sins of this world! Even a glimpse of it, devotion for it, or even thinking of it, will easily bring all fulfilment like ‘a fruit into the palm of your hand’ like an *amalaka*.

*swaami pushkarinii snaanam sadguroh
paada sevanam
ekadasii vratham chaapi trayamatyanta
durlabham
durlabham maanusham janma durlabham
tatra jiivanam
swaami pushkarinii snaanam tray
matyanta durlabham*

The Varaha Purana proclaims that “a dip in Swami Pushkarini, worshipping serving at the feet of a holy teacher, and observance of *Ekadasi* are the three most difficult things to come by in human life. Similarly, taking birth as a human being, to live like a human being, and to take a holy bath in Swami Pushkarini — these three are also most difficult to come by.”

This pond on the hill named Venkata, sporting an infinite number of powers, shines like a lord from among all the *tirthas*, so the significant name Swami Pushkarini has come to it.”

*dhanurmaase sithe pakshe dvaadasyaam
arunodaye
aayaanti sarva teerthaani swaami pushkarinii
jale*

*tatra snaanam prakurvanti ye naraaha
priita maanasaaha
te sarva paapairmuchyante sagotra gjnaati
baandhavaaha*

It is said that in this very holy body of water every year on the day following the Vaiakuntha *Ekadasi* at the time of dawn, all the *tirthas* in all the three worlds flow into this *pushkarini*! Hence, this *Ekadasi* is known as *Swami Pushkarini Tirtha Mukkoti*. Similarly whoever takes a wholehearted dip in the Pushkarini at dawn of the twelfth day in the bright half of the month of *Dhanush*, they, along with all their folks of the *gotra* and their realtions will be rid of all their sins.

The effect of this Pushkarini is immeasurable. Yet, at this time there is a huge need to know about two or three stories which speak about its greatness. Listen then carefully to these stories,” so saying sage Suta continued his narration.

The Greatness of Swami Pushkarini

The story of King Sankhana stands prime among the stories which speak of the greatness of this Pushkarini.

King Sankhana

In olden days the kingdom of Kambhoja was ruled by a king named Sankhana. He was famed to have looked after his people like a parent but he also used to place his trust easily in people without

a trace of doubt about them. For this reason he was easily duped by his enemies, lost his kingdom, and became a sad vagrant. He used to wander about directionless along with his wife undergoing innumerable difficulties.

As the wise ones say that pilgrimages are to be undertaken in hard times and praying to deities in times of unfavourable planetary positions, this king, after visiting many sacred places like Sri Rangam, Rameswaram, Madhura, Kanchi at last reached the divine centre of Sri Venkatadri. There in the nearby holy river Suvarnamukhari, praying ardently and devotedly he took a bath along with his wife.

Then he also heard that Goddess Sri Maha Lakshmi was born in a thousand petalled lotus flower as “Padmavathi” in a lake called *Padmasarovara*. He took a bath in it too. Meditating on the Goddess Padmavathi he rested for a while. He was so tired after his wanderings that he fell asleep. He got a beautiful dream in his sleep. He dreamt that someone called him, and took him along and going up the holy mountain named Venkata, finally showed him the Swami Pushkarini. Moreover he also had a divine feeling that he was told to take a bath in there so that all his trials and tribulations will be removed, evil effects of planetary positions will be cast aside and it will begin a series of auspicious happenings—that he would get his kingdom back. Then he woke up.

Surprised at this strange dream experience and also feeling a wonderful inexpressible sense of joy and devotion, Sankhana went up the holy hill of Venkata. Impressed by the beauty of nature there and the spiritual glow of it all he immersed himself in the waters of Swami Pushkarini. He contemplated, meditated prayed to the God and also did penance-*tapas*. About six months went by easily in this manner.

Then one day, a golden divine tower-*vimana* glowing wonderfully and strangely, rose from the centre of that Pushkarini. Sri Maha Vishnu, along with Sri Devi and Bhu Devi, adorned with golden ornaments, and beautiful scented flower garlands, appeared in a thousand splendoured glory in that *vimana*. Brahma and all the gods, surprised at this spectacle, showered a rain of flowers on the God. All of them each in one's own way and in many ways sang in his praise.

King Sankhana also, glancing in wide eyed wonder along with his wife at the Lord being praised by the gods, sang His praise. He prostrated in front of the Lord. He offered the flowers of his salutations. Satisfied by the devotion of the king, Sri Hari spoke thus:

“O’King! I have come here now for your sake. Your sins are washed away by the bath you took in the *pushkarini*. By my *darsan* you have become pure, your impurities removed like the gold that is

purified. Very soon you will regain your lost kingdom. You will reign for a long time enjoying kingly life and all pleasures. It is not merely this. You will also be delivered from the cycle of rebirth to attain *kaivalya*." Thus granting him many boons Sri Hari disappeared.

Blessed by the divine words and the nectarine looks of Sri Swami, greatly pleased, recollecting the divine auspicious form of the Lord on and on, offering obeisance to the *pushkarini*, the king went back to his kingdom. By god's grace he conquered his enemies easily. Favoured and welcomed by his people he ascended the throne again. In this way he ruled his people comfortably and happily to the delight of his subjects and finally also attained *moksha* mainly because he took a bath in the powerful Swami Pushkarini. Listen to another similar story which speaks about the power of Swami Pushkarini." So saying Suta continued with his narration.

Atmarama

A long time ago there lived in the central region an astute *brahman* practitioner of great rich traditions. At all times this *vipra* used to take care of guests and unexpected persons with great attention. He used to always offer food to all, and as an ideal householder he used to spend his time in observing his daily spiritual practices. He ended up in penury at last, all the property and wealth accrued

by his forefathers melted away consumed like camphor. In addition to being left penniless he had to undergo untold difficulties. Hence, lost and directionless, he left his place and became a vagabond.

In his wanderings by and by he reached the holy *Kapilatirtham* below Venkatadri. Having taken a bath in that holy stream he had *darsan* of Swami Sri Kapileswara. Later as he was going up the hill Venkatadri Atmarama came across a cave on the way. He saw an ascetic named Sanat Kumara in the cave to whom he saluted and prayed. He told the story of his difficulties and prayed for a way out of his trials.

Sanat Kumara had a glimpse at the past life of the *brahman* with his divine powers and said: "You have committed many sins in your past lives. For this reason you are subjected to these endless difficulties and losses. Yet all those are washed away by your bath in Kapila *tirtha*. Now what you surely need is the grace of Goddess Lakshmi for all types of prosperity. Now that Goddess Maha Lakshmi is enthroned in the bosom of Sri Maha Vishnu as *Vyuha Lakshmi*, If you take a bath in Swami Pushkarini and go to worship her Her infinite kind graceful looks will be on you. Then all that you desire will be granted to you." Then he imparted this *maha mantra* to the *brahman*.

*dayaalola tarangaakshi puurna chandra
 nibhaananana
 jananii sarva lokaanaam mahalaxmihi
 haripriyaa
 sarvapaapaharaa saiva prarabdhasyaapi
 karmanaha
 samhrutautu kshamaasaiva sarva sampat
 pradaayinii
 tasyaaha vyuuhaprabhedaastu lakshmih
 kiirthirjayeti cha
 tatra yaa vyuuha lakshmih saamugdhaa
 kaarunya vigraha
 anaayaasena saa lakshmi sarva paapa
 pranaasinii
 sarvaiswarya pradaa nityam tasyaaha mantra
 mimam sruunu
 vedaadimaayai maatre cha lakshamai
 natipadam vadeth
 parameti padamchoktvaa lakshmyaa iti
 padam tatah
 vishnu vakshahsthitayai syaat maayaa sree
 taarikaa tataha
 vahnijaayaanta mantroyam abhiishtaardha
 suradrumaha
 dwibhujaa vyuhalakshmiissyaadhbaddha
 padmaasana priyaa
 sriinivaasaanga madhyasthaa sutaraam
 kesava priyaa
 taam eva saranam gachha sarva bhavena
 satvaram
 iti mantra mupaadisyadadruse na kutra chit*

Sri Maha Laksmi, her nice lotus face resplendent like the full moon is the mother of worlds! with looks overflowing with compassion, she reigns over all the dear devotees of Sri Hari.

The Mother of the Universe is capable not only of dispelling unbearable effects of past deeds and impurities of past but also of granting all types of wealth!

Lakshmi, Keerti, and Jaya are the Universal Mother's different aspects-*vyuha*. Lakshmi is important as the aspect-*vyuha* of herself seated in the bosom of Srinivasa. She is beautiful in her appearance. Her beauty steals hearts and she is an embodiment of compassion.

She easily dispels all sins and also grants all kinds of wealth. I shall give you her *mantra*. Do listen carefully.

The word *veda*, the word *mata*, the word *Parama Lakshmi*, the word *Vishnu vakshasthala sthitayai*, the word *maya*, and the word *tarika* and more....

Add the word *vahnijayai* to the *mantra* and recite the *mantra*. This *mantra* like the wish fulfilling tree-*Kalpavriksha* grants all desires.

The lotus seated Devi Vyuh Lakshmi with two hands, enthroned in the bosom of Srinivasa is the dearest to Lord Sri Maha Vishnu. Take a bath in the ordained manner in Swami Pushkarini, with all your

mind, word and deed praying for her protection, begin to worship her at once," he said and thus giving the *mantra* to Atma Rama, Sanat kumara disappeared.

Atmarama was amazed and happy too at the scene that has just unraveled itself; even more devotedly and with total surrender he went up on to the Venkata hill, taking a holy dip in the streams scattered along the hill ranges on the way, especially he took a bath in the seventeen streams and finally reached Seshachala. There everyday after taking a holy bath in the Swami Pushkarini he began to worship Sri Swami and the goddess *Vyuha Lakshmi* enshrined in his bosom with devotion and ardour. After some time the God adorned by *sankha chakra* and the rest of his five weapons, garlands and armlets - *keyuras*, crown and ear ornaments, and the goddess Maha Lakshmi in his bosom appeared before Atmarama's eyes. With the appearance of this glorious divine form Atmarama was totally overwhelmed and speechless; Blessing him the God Srinivasa said, "O" *Vipra*! Your sins are washed completely away by the holy bath in Swami Pushkarini. Goddess Lakshmi's infinite grace has radiated towards you. From now onwards being in a state of prosperity, doing charitable and righteous deeds live in happy prosperity," and disappeared.

Atmarama describes the divine auspicious form and his divine deeds as follows.

*venkatesaatparo devo naastanyaha saranam
bhushi
venkatesa samo devo naasti naasti mahaatite
swaami pushkarnii tiirtha samam naasti
nachaasti hi*

“There is no god, none anywhere on earth other than Lord Sri Venkateswara who resides in Seshachala. It is enough to seek his protection! There is no other protection above it! Is there a god equal to Sri Venkatewara anywhere on earth? With all certainty it can be said there is none. So also there is no other *tiirtha* whatever which equals the Swami Pushkarini”, thus praising Sri Venkatewara in several ways and with mind full of devotion for his guru Sanatkumara, Atmarama reached his place, lived happily and got liberated finally. Not only this the power of Swami Pushkarini is infinite! and it is wonderful!” So telling about the stories of Sankhana and Atmarama, Suta continued his narration about the magic of Swami Pushkarini *tiirtha* further in this way.

Purging the Sin of Brahma Hatya

Once upon a time Kumara Swami the chieftain of gods’s army killed the demon Tarakasura who was a thorn in the body of the worlds. The sin *brahma hatya* of killing demon Taraka enveloped him. Shanmukha went about to many many places for the dispersal of the sin. It was not only of no avail but he was also vexed about wandering

aimlessly in that manner. Finally he sought the grace of Parameswara. Parama Siva ordered him to go to Venkatadri and pray to Swami Pushkarini there. Kumara Swami at once went to the pious tirtha and took a bath in the pure waters. And then surprised at the magical power of the *pushkarini* Kumara Swami had a darsan of Sri Maha Vishnu in his play of human form along with his consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi as he sauntered about in that holy place and thus blessed he went back. And the sage also added thus:

“O ‘sages great! In this context the story of a *vipra* named Kasyapa which speaks of the greatness of Swami Pushkarini comes to my mind. I will narrate it to you, so please listen attentively!”

The King Named Parikshit

Those were the days when Abhimanyu’s son Parikshit was ruling Hastinapura. On a certain day Parikshit who went hunting, became very tired; he was stricken by thirst and hunger. Even then wildly craving for a kill he went chasing a deer. But the deer escaped from the king’s sight in a jiffy and ran away. The king went in search of the deer and found the hermitage of a sage called Samika. He saw Samika seated in front of the *asrama* under the canopy of a huge tree in a deep meditative state. Parikshit, vexed in hunting, noticing none of these, approached Samika and asked him: “O great Sage! did you see the deer I am hunting come by, this

way? Did you happen to see it?" As he was absorbed in meditation the sage Samika did not give a reply. The king asked again and again but got no answer, and driven mad by hunger and thirst he lost all sense of propriety. He became extremely angry. "I am the emperor of Hastina! and this insult to me from a mere skinny *brahman*?" So thinking, very severely angry having lost all sense of right and wrong, he pulled a dead snake from the bushes by the end of his bow. He fetched and threw it around the meditating sage's neck like a garland. Sringi the son of Samika who came back to the *asram* later, saw the dead snake hanging around his father's neck. He came to know from others that it was Parikshit's deed. As he was greatly devoted to his father and enraged on seeing the dead snake, he uttered a severe curse - "the fellow who put this dead snake in my father's neck—may he die by a great poisonous snake named *Takshaka* in seven days time!"

Samika, who opened his eyes after meditation, came to know about the curse his son uttered. He felt that cursing a king who takes care of the welfare of his people is an unwise act of his son. So at once he sent his disciple named Gauravamukha to the king's presence with the caution that the king should take necessary care of his safety and protect himself. The king on hearing about this felt saddened and thought "isn't heaping insult on venerable ones and the elderly a sin?" He had a hall built on the top of single pillared structure in the river Ganga. He

summoned men of medicine capable of driving great poisonous serpents away and *mantrasastravettas* to ward off the event. May it be so, still interested in listening to the stories of Vishnu he invited *deva rishis*, divine sages, *brahma rishis* and others and began to listen to the stories about divine deeds.

Keeping this aside, a very great mystic —*maha mantra vetta*, a *brahman* named Kasyapa began his journey to the king in order to protect the king from Takshaka's venom. It was the last day, that is the seventh day. He was a poor man, so with the idea of saving the king's life and being rewarded with wealth began to rush excitedly to the king's place. Takshaka observed this, and assuming the form of a *brahman*, approached Kasyapa and asked: "O' holy *brahman*, who are you? Why are you running in such a hurry?" Then Kasyapa said: "I am a *maha mantra vetta* named Kasyapa! I shall save the king who is going to die from Takshaka's venom with my magical power gained from *mantra*. Thereby I shall become wealthy."

"Is it so? Alright then, I am that Takshaka! I shall strike this great tree with my bite. Show me your powers ..." So saying Takshaka reduced the tree to ashes with his venomous bite.

Endowed with great mystical powers Kasyapa, brought the tree burnt by Takshaka's venom to its formal lush green lustrous form in no time at all. Another *brahman* who was on the same tree

plucking its leaves was also burnt down to ashes but because of Kasyapa's mystical powers came back to life along with the tree.

Observing this Takshaka addressed Kasyapa thus:" Sire! O' noble *brahman*! You are endowed with very infinitely great mystical powers. But is not the utterance of a great sage too irreversible? The sage's curse should not become ineffective. Hence, you should turn back. I shall give you riches greater than what you may otherwise get. Consider it."

Kasyapa, able to assess the past and future of Parikshit with his divine insight, concluded that since the king any way had a short life, any treatment to the king would be of no avail, he tied the money Takshaka gave him into a bundle and went away.

Later Parikshit died because of Takshaka's poisonous bite.

People came to know about the incident from the *brahmana* on the tree who was burnt along with the tree and was brought back to life and people hated Kasyapa for his misdeed. They did not let him come near them. They used to move away on seeing him like he was an untouchable. They used to drive him away from those places wherever he did go. In this way finding no recourse he sought refuge with an ascetic named Sakalya and made a submission of his pitiable state to him.

"O'Swami! O' great one! All people are chastising me for no reason wherever I go. But I

have not committed any sins. They are not letting me in anywhere and they are driving me away. Please explain to me what my misdeed is and save me,” pleaded Kasyapa in many ways and prayed.

Prime Duties of a Vaidya

Then Sakalya the ascetic looked at him from ‘foot to head’; he thought for a while, and said: “O’ good *brahman*! You did a great wrong. You were greedy after money. In stead of saving Parikshit from the terrible poison of Takshaka by your powers you went back without exercising your power as mystic.

King Parikshit is a devotee of Maha Vishnu. He is a great *yogi*. Moreover, people have the responsibility of protecting their king. But to leave such a king without trying to save him is an unpardonable crime.

*yaavatkanthagataa praanaaha
mumoorshormaanavasya hi
taavatschikitsaa kartavyaa kaalasya kutilaa
gatihi
iti praahuhu puraa slokam bhishagvidyaabdhi
paaragaaha
tatchikisitsaa sakto pi yasmaadakruta
bheshajaha*

Even when a patient is about to die, as long as there is breath in his body, a doctor must try seriously to save his life with all his knowledge of medicine. It is because times can be very crooked. So say those

eminent elderly men of expertise in the field of medicine.

One must not enter into this field seeking great fame or out of greed for money. That doctor who wants to serve should at no time deny treatment to the needy. Not only that. Treatment should be given as per the disease. A doctor should never say that “this patient will die soon.” As long as the patient breathes must the doctor continue to give the treatment. A doctor should only think about the disease and the treatment but never decide about life. Moreover, he should never say there is some disease where there is none, nor should he exaggerate a small disease to be a serious one. When a doctor performs his duty with a lot of patience, diligence, perseverance, he will then gather a lot of merit here and hereafter.”

“You are quite capable of treating King Parikshit but inspite of it, of your own accord you have concluded that his life is short lived, and tempted by greed, you went back without giving treatment. That sin is haunting you. That is the reason for these people to be chastising you. That is why they are driving you away everywhere...,” explained the ascetic Sakalya.

Then a very remorseful Kasyapa pleaded with the sage Sakalya in this way: “O’ Sage! Please show me a way that will free me from that terrible sin. Please be kind to me so that my relations, friends,

and all people, will be kind to me as earlier and welcome me.”

Sage Sakalya, eyes half closed in meditation for a while

*asya paapasya saantyardham upaayam
pravadaami te
tatkartavyam tvayaa siighram vilambam
maa kritaa dwija!
suvarnamukharii tiire lakshmipati
nivaasabhuuh
venkataadri riti khyataaha sarva lokeshu
puujitah
tasmin seshagirau punye suraasura
namaskrute
brahmahatyaa suraapaana swarnastheyaadi
naasake
swami puskharinii cheti sarva
paapaapanodini
uttare sriinivaasasya vartate
mangalapradaa
tam gatvaa venkatam sailam swaami
puskhariniim subhaam
snaatvaa sankalpa poorvantu varaaha
swaaminam harim
sevitvaa paschime tiire nirgatya hari
mandiram
gatvaa tatra vidhaanena swarnaachala
nivaasinam
sreenivaasam param devam
bhakthaanamabhayapradam*

*sankha chakra dharam devam vanamaala
 vibhuushitam
 drusshtvaa nirdhuuta paapo si samsayam
 maa kruthaa dvija*

and said,” Hey Kasyapa, I will tell you a way out of this terrible sin you have committed. Follow it up at once.”

There is this glorious region Venkatachala a very famous place which is worshipped by all the worlds; it is the place where Sri Maha Vishnu has taken residence.

It is the place which purges sins such as killing a *brahman* i.e. *brahmahatya*, taking intoxicating drinks and stealing gold. Both gods and demons come here to worship every day.

*swaami puskharinium tyaktvaa teertha
 manya drvaje ttu yaha
 snigdham sa gopayastyaktvaa snuhii
 kshiram prayaachate
 swaami tiirtham swami tiirtham swami
 tiirtham iti dwijaaha
 trihpathanto naraa evam yatra kvaapi
 jalaasaye
 snaanti sarve naraastevai yaasyanti
 brahmanah padam*

“Those who leave Swami Pushkarini in the holy Venkatachala region and go in search of other streams are akin to those who leave the best holy

cow's thick milk and take the white sap of cactus plants. Whenever and wherever devotees take a bath in river waters may they then utter 'Swami Pushkarini, Swami Pushkarini, Swami Pushkarini,' thrice which is sufficient to grant them the ultimate state of liberation."

"In such a holiest of holy Venkatachala region, very close to the north of the lord Srinivasa's abode, lies the *tirtha* called Swami Pushkarini which not only decimates all sins but also grants all things auspicious."

"Go at once to that holy place. Take a bath in those auspicious waters with devotion, with your inteded desires in mind, and then have the *darsan* of Swami Sri Adi Varaha enshrined on the north west side."

"Then go to the shrine on the west into the lord's divine presence where, adorned by *sankha*, *chakra*, *vanamala* and such others, dispelling the fears of devotees, granting boons He stands enshrined. Worship him with utmost faith. Get rid of your sins. Have no doubt at all whatsoever," directed the sage.

Kasyapa the mystic of medicine-*mantra vaidya* made obeisance to Sage Sakalya and at once set on his pilgrimage to Venkatachala. There in the holy waters of Swami Pushkarini in the region he took bath as prescribed in the scriptures, and cleansed of his sins, once again he was regarded by people as earlier." Suta said that those who listen to this

episode will be regarded and respected in Vishnuloka and added further.

Fear of Naraka Dispelled

A holy dip in Swami Pushkarini will accrue purity. Twenty eight kinds of hells such as—*tamisram, andhatamisram, maharauravam, rauravam, kumbhipakam, kalasutram, asipatravanam* and others move away from the path of those who ever praises, sings of Swami Pushkarini in a spirit of complete devotion and takes a holy bath in it. All these hells are caused by doing unimaginable, indescribable, unspeakable great sins. All such terrible sins will be purged from a holy dip in the waters of Swami Pushkarini alone. Hence, one should sing the praise of the holy Swami Pushkarini. One must take a bath in these holy pure waters with great devotion and worship it. It must never be looked down upon with disrespect. There should never be a trace of doubt about the sanctity of Swami Pushkarini. Moreover, one should never give scope for raising doubts in the minds of those who are very devout in spirit. Those who prattle that all the faith and conviction of devotees is untrue and merely imagined will take birth as useless, abominable pigs and end up in the terrible hells mentioned before.”

*aho maurkhyamaho
maurkhyam dwijottamaaha
swaami tiirthaabhidhe tiirtha sarva paataka
naasane*

*advaita jnaanade pumsaam bhukti mukti
 pradaayini
 ista kaama prade nityam tathaiva agjnaana
 naasane
 sthite pi tadvihaayaayam ramatenyatra vai
 janaha
 aho mohasya maahaaatmyam mayaa
 vaktum na sakyate
 snaatasya swami tiirtha tu naastikaadhbhaya
 masti vai
 swami tiirthamcha pasyanti tatra snaanti
 cha ye naraha
 stuvanti cha prasamsanti sprusanti cha
 namanti cha
 na pibanti hi te stanyam maatruunaam dvija
 pungavaaha
 evam vah kathitam vipraaha swami
 teerthasya vaibhavam
 bhukti mukti pradam nruunaam sarva
 paapa nibarhanam*

“O’ great sages! Human beings are highly ignorant. Their ignorance is astounding. But the waters of Swami Pushkarini can decimate all terrible sins.”

Swami Pushkarini is famed not only for giving divine knowledge about the soul that dwells in all living and non living things, for granting devotion in this world and liberation later, thus giving comfort in both this life and in life after, but also as the dispeller of ignorance.

“Ignoring Swami Pushkarini people take great interest in talking about many other useless matters. It is not possible for me to speak of the extent of their ignorance.”

“A holy dip in Swami Pushkarini will scatter the fear atheists cause. Those who worship it, those who take a bath in it, those who praise it, those who touch it or those who make obeisance... all such persons will never again take birth in a mother’s womb. They will never suckle at the mother’s breast. It means that they will have no rebirth!”

“Hence O’ learned ascetics! I told you about the glory of the holy Swami Pushkarini which grants devotion, liberation and dispels all sins,” said Suta and added this further.

The Story of Dharma Gupta

In times past, there was a famous king named Nanda born in the Lunar clan whose rule was appreciated by his people. A son named Dharma Gupta was born to him. Bequeathing the kingdom to his son Nanda went to the forest for doing penance.

Dharma Gupta too, as befits his name was ruling his kingdom in a just manner, was even more renowned than his father and flourished in this way. One day as Dharma Gupta was hunting in the forest night fell. A lion saw him and chased him. Fear of life drove him to run and clamber up on a tree protecting himself from the lion. But there was

already a bear on the tree. Dharma Gupta's heart missed a beat when he sighted the bear. His position was such that 'there was a well before him and deep pit behind him' meaning that he was facing danger from both the lion and the bear.

Then the bear addressed him in human speech and said, "O king! Do not be afraid. Let us both rest on this tree this night. I will not harm you in any way. So, being tired have a good night's sleep without a trace of fear. I will safeguard you from the claws of the lion like the lid of eye would my eye. Later I will go to sleep. Then you have to protect me."

Dharma Gupta went peacefully to sleep without an iota of worry. Lion asked the bear to throw Dharma Gupta down for its meal. But the bear said, "I have offered him my protection. He trusted me completely. Those who trust should not be cheated. One should not even think of cheating them. There is no redemption for such persons. So, leave your greed and go away." By then the king woke up from sleep. Then the bear went to sleep. The king began to take care of it. Then the lion as earlier told the king to push the bear down as its food. Then the king, without any thought, pushed the bear down from the tree in an act of betrayal of trust. The bear woke up suddenly and catching hold of a branch climbed up the tree. Angry, it said, "you traitor! but is it in return for guarding you that you threw me down? A person devoid of loyalty like you must

surely be punished. Wander about as a senseless, mad fellow!" Cursed the bear.

His ministers spotted the senseless, prattling, wandering Dharma Gupta. They took the mad king to his father Nanda who was doing penance on the banks of river Rewa in the forest. The former king, saddened by this strange story, took his son to Sage Jaimini and pleaded to show him a way out of curing him of this madness.

The great sage Jaimini in his divine sight saw that "the son was cursed not only for forgetting the help but also for his betrayal," and added:

*suvarnamukharii tiire venkato naama
parvate
sarvapaapa hare punnye naanaa dhaatu
vinirmite
swaami puskhariniicheti tiirthamasti
mahattaram
pavitraanaam pavitram hi mangalaanaam
cha mangalam
sruti siddham mahaapunyam
brahmahatyadi sodhakam
niitvaa tatra sutam tedy a snaapayasya
mahaamate
unmaadastakshanaadeva tasya nasye nna
samsayaha*

On the banks of the very holy river Suvarnamukhari there is a sacred place called Venkatachala which burns away all sins.

There is a *tirtha* called Swami Pushkarini. It is the holiest of all those holy *tirthas*. It is the most auspicious of all the auspicious *tirthas*.

It is mentioned in the Vedas too as being very famous. This holy *tirtha* removes the sins like *brahma hatya* and such others. Hence, take your son to Venkatachala. Make him take a bath in Swami Pushkarini! At once he will be cured of his derangement. Having been cured of his madness he will become normal.

Ordered by the great sage Jaimini, when old king Nanda made his son take a bath in Swami Pushkarini he was cured of his mental imbalance. Later they worshipped Lord Sri Venkateswara and got their prayers granted. Dharma Gupta was taken aback at the infinite compassion of the God, the magic of Swami Pushkarini. Extremely happy with devotion and *prapatti*, he made many offerings, and gave several gifts, deeds of charity of distributing food, money, cows, land and other items and returned to his kingdom.

*evam vaha kathithaa vipraaha
dharmaguptam kathaa subhaa
yasyaaha sravanamaatrena brahmahatya
vinasyati*

“O’ sages! Those who listen to the story of Dharma Gupta which I have just narrated will be rid of the sin of *brahmahatya*.” So saying Saunaka continued in this way.

*venkataadrau mahaa punye sarvapaataka
naasane
swami puskharineecheti vartate
mangalapradaa
bho! bho! tapodhanaaha sarve naimisaaranya
vaasinaha
swaamitiirthasya maahaatmyam bhooyopi
pravadaamyaham*

“This holy place Venkatadri is renowned for its ability to destroy all kinds of sins. You know that there shines a *tirtha* called Swami Pushkarini which gives a series of all things auspicious, isn’t it! O’ great ascetics residing in the very holy region of the Naimisha forest! I shall again and again tell you about the greatness of the Swami Pushkarini further.” Thus sage Suta as he narrated as to how Sri Adi Varaha came to reside on the mountain Venkata, began to narrate about the magic of the Swami Pushkarini also.

The Story of Sumati

Once upon a time there was a *brahman* named Yagjna Deva in the Maharashtra region. Irrespective of who it was, mine or thine, being kind to all, worshipping both Siva and Kesava every day, well known to be a pious man the *brahman*, he served guests and unexpected visitors everyday and made pure, he was blessed by a son named Sumati after a very very long time.

He who grew up to be a befitting son of a benevolent father, got married to a beautiful lady.

Their family was living happily and comfortably. As it is said, *vinasakale vipariita buddhi hi*, in bad times the mind takes a wrong turn, Sumati left his beautiful wife, his very loving parents and desirous of enjoyments of the flesh left for Utkala region.

His gaze fell on a young lustrous youthful virgin of the bird catchers-*boya* clan. Sumati bewitched by her looks fell for her. He forgot everything about his loving parents, his sensitive minded wife, even the place of his birth too vanished completely from his mind. He was totally enamoured of this woman of easy virtue. Even though spurned by this woman, considering her to be his all, clinging to the end of her saree, eating meat and drinking liquor in her company, indulging and gone astray, he had fallen. Not only his habits but his speech, and his apparel too underwent a complete change. Ultimately he forgot fully that he was a *brahman* and went about like a bird catcher.

This fallen man of a *brahman* went for robbery along with others of the tribe. For that he entered the house of a wealthy *brahman*. The householder resisted and fought whom Sumati killed with his sharp sword, and took away the money in the house. Then a ferocious form-*brahamahatya*

*niila vastradharaa bhiimaa bhusam rakta
siroruhaa
garjantii saattahaasam kampayantii cha
rodasii*

in black clothes, frightening with her red disheveled hair, with an earth and sky shattering laughter, came after him.

The *brahman* started running away frightened by *brahamahatya* who came after him. That fallen *brahman* began to run, roaming continuously finally reached his native place. Terribly frightened he sought refuge with his father. Not knowing his son's whereabouts caused great pain to Yagnna Deva. His spirit was revived on seeing his son. He embraced his son. He told him not to be frightened at all and took him in with great love.

By then in her uncouth form *brahamahatya* also reached the place and restless she said, "O' sire Yagnna Deva! do not entertain this son of yours who is debased in all respects. He drank liquor and he ate meat among many other wrong doings. Moreover, he murdered a *brahman*. He has wronged his mother, his father; in addition, due to his infatuation for a *vesya* he left his wife even,—the wife who left her parents and followed him as he is everything to her. He is a great sinner. If you give shelter to this fellow, I will devour you, devour your wife his wife...and end your family line. Do not destroy your clan. So, think wisely and leave this lowly fellow," she spoke harshly.

On hearing this Yagnna Deva pleaded, "however degenerate may he be and what ever may his sinful acts be, is he not my son? How can I stifle my love

for him? How can I leave him?" An enraged *brahmahatya* struck Sumati hard. Looking at his father Sumati began to wail pitifully and loudly.

As his parents and his wife were distraught at his condition, there arrived sage Durvasa, a great *yogi*, an ascetic born of an element of Rudra.

On seeing the great sage, Yagjna Deva showing his son, pleading with him in many ways, begged the sage to save his son from the sin of *brahamahatya* by some means, as Sumati was his only son and his family line would end if he dies.

Then sage Durvasa thought deeply for a while and spoke: "Yagjna Deva! The sin your son committed is of an unspeakable nature. Any number of retributions will still make it impossible to be freed from it. Yet there appears a way. Listen very carefully."

There is a sacred place on this earth capable of dissolving all kinds of sins. That place is Sri Venkatachala. Swami Pushkarini is a *tirtha* in that holy place which grants a series of various auspicious happenings. If you make your son take a holy bath in those waters, he will be rid of the sin of *brahmahatya* at once.

As a great axe that fells trees does Swami Pushkarini uproot big sins. Have no doubts whatsoever. Go as soon as possible to Venkatachala. And pray at Swami Pushkarini!" He blessed them.

At once Yagjna Deva took his son into the vicinity of Sri Venkatesa, and made him take a bath in Swami Pushkarini. Then an invisible voice spoke sweetly in this way:

“O’ Yagjna Deva! Great One! Your son is absolved from the sin of *brahmahatya* and become purged. There is no need to doubt this at all.”

Like gold that is purified, with his son freed of sin, Yagjna Deva worshipped Srinivasa and went back to his native place. Hence,

*evam prabhaavam tattirtham paapa vriksha
kuthaarakam
evam vaha kathitam vipraaha itihasaam
puraatanam
srunvataam pathataam chaapi vaajpeya
phalam labhet*

As a great *gandra* axe fells trees does Swami Pushkarini burns away huge sins. I told you this story of great antiquity. O’ sage Saunaka and others! All those who listen or, read this story will very easily accrue the fruits equal to performance of a Vajapeya *yagam*.” Suta also added this.

The Fruit of All Pilgrimages

“Once the ascetic Markandeya prayed to Lord Brahma with utmost concentration and devotion. Pleased by the power of his prayer Brahma Deva appeared and said, “O’ ascetic! With what intention are you praying? I shall grant it. Ask your wish.”

Then Markandaya asked to grant him a boon, “O God! Give me the ability to worship all the *tirthas* in this universe.”

Brahma Deva replied, “O’ great sage! Your desire will not be fulfilled even in thousands of years of time. Not merely for you, but neither for me nor even to Rudra will it be possible. Even then there is no cause for concern. Let me tell you something that will grant you the fruits of worshipping all the *tirthas*. Listen carefully.

*asti srii venkatonaama prathitaha
parvatottamaha
dravideshu mahapunyaha sevita
stridasairgirihi
tasya sringesu mahatii punyaa
paapavinasinii
swaami pushkarinii naama sarasii sarva
kaamadaa*

There is a king among mountains known as Venkata at a distance of about two hundred *yojanas* from here. It is a very sacred place, a place which gives great merits.

On the top of the mountain there is an excellent pond called Swami Pushkarini. It does not only dispel sins and give merits but also fulfills all desires.

*dhanurmaase sithe pakshe dvaadasyaam
arunodaye
aayaanti sarva theerthaani swami pushkarinii
jale*

Every year in the month of Dhanu, at dawn on the twelfth day in the bright fortnight, that is in the month of Margasirsha all the *tirthas* enter into this Swami Pushkarini. You know why, since several sinners immerse themselves and make them impure, all those *tirthas* come here in order to get rid of their impurities on that day! Hence, O' sage Markandaya! On that special pious day you too take dip in those waters. You will thereby accrue the merits of worshipping all the *tirthas*." So directed God Brahma.

As ordained by the four headed god Brahma, Markandaya took a holy bath in Swami Pushkarini at dawn on the twelfth day in the bright fortnight in the month of Margasirsha. Then he prayed in many ways to the lord of Sri Venkatachala, got his desires granted and he went away fulfilled", said Suta to Saunaka and other sages and continued to speak further about Swami Pushkarini in this way.

Goddess Sarawathi

Once upon a time goddess Sarawathi wanted to gain fame and respect as a greater and more powerful one joined the rivers like Ganga and began to flow in the form of a river. At that time a great sage named Pulastyam came to the river bank to do penance. River Saraswathi did not show the respect or regard due to the sage as a son nor did she even care to speak to him.

*tatastaam kupidaha praaha yaa te kankshaa
 saraswathi
 tava saa viphalaat bhuuyaat nadii ruupena
 sarvadaa
 guna saamanya bhaave pi vishnupaada
 prabhavataha
 tavaadhisthena yasasa bhavishyati saridvara
 tiirthotkrishtaa saiva bhuyaat bhuvi
 gangakhyayaa subha*

Hence, the sage was so enraged that he uttered a curse saying, “O’ Saraswathi! Your wish to become more famous than rivers like Ganga and others will not be fulfilled. Although you, like all other rivers, are holy, only Ganga which is born of the feet of Sri Maha Vishnu will be held in great esteem as the holiest of all rivers”.

Saraswathi who was angry at the curse given by the sage said: “O’ great sage! Doing penance but also being egoistic you have uttered this curse for no reason. She in turn cursed him thus: So

*raakshasaste bhavedvamso vishnorapriya
 kaarakaha*

“Let your clan continue to grow with demons who fall out of favour of Sri Maha Vishnu!” So Pulastya became remorseful for his hasty deed, prayed to her in many ways to be kind hearted and forgive him, and to remove the curse. Seeing a remorseful and humbled Pulastya relenting goddess Sarawaathi blessed him that only the last of his clan

named Vibhishsana will be the most dear devotee of Sri Maha Vishnu who will shine as an immortal.”

Then river Saraswathi aspiring for the greatest and highest place did a severe penance. God Vishnu, pleased by the strength of her will, her steadfastness and her penance, appeared before her, asked her to make a wish and told her that he would grant it. At once, Sarawathi pitifully prayed that she may regain her status as a river which was lost due to the curse of Pulastya Brahma.

Immediately god Vishnu granted her that although she could not gain the lost status of a great river due to the curse of Pulastya Brahma, He said “you will not only occupy the highest place in the form of a *pushkarini*, but also have a glorious place as the most sacred, as the highest-a king among *tirthas*.” He also said:

*ataha seshagirim gachcha vaasardham
yaami tam girim
girerdakshinabhaage tu muurdhva dese
sukham vasa
swaami pushkarinii vaseyam tava dakshine
tisra kotyardha kotiicha tiirdhaani
bhuvanatraye
sva sva paapa vimokshaardham
yaachayishyanti maam subhe
teshaam paapa vimokshaardham tvayi
snaanam dadaamyaham
dhanurmaase sithe pakshe dvaadasyaam
arunodaye*

*snaanaardhamaagatamtiitrhajaalampreshyatva
 maapnuyaat
 tiirthaadhiraajye tattiiurtha jalam
 tvaamabhipekshati*

“Go at once from here to the holy place of Seshachala. Go and take place there in the name of Swami Pushkarini as a very holy *tirtha*. I will come there to the south of where you will be as *tirtha* and reign there. Not only that, all the three and half crores of *tirthas* in all three worlds which derive the sins of all those devotees come to me and pray to me for getting rid of those sins. For the sake of cleansing them of those sins, I order all those *tirthas* to be washed by your waters which will be known by the name of Swami Pushkarini. Those *tirthas* will reach you, praise you, will do *abhishekam* to you, take a bath in your waters and be cleansed.” In this way Sri Maha Vishnu granted a boon to the river Saraswathi. The waters thus formed are known by the famous name of Swami Pushkarini. So Swami Pushkarini has nine holy *tirthas* which flourish in it having various curious stories and astonishing tales related to them. Know their names and also about the wonders they do,” said Suta and continued.

The Nine Holy Tirthas in Swami Pushkarini

Till now you have heard, the several wonderful, interesting and surprising stories about Swami Pushkarini. Know that even in its central part reside many holy streams. Nine among them have to be mentioned prominently.

Kubera Tirtha

*uttare dhanadam tiirtham dhanadena
vinirmitam
sampaadamaapnuyaat
yatasnaatvaaghanirmukto
dhanasampada maapnuyaat*

On the northern side of Swami Pushkarini is situated the stream named *Dhanada tirtha*. This was built by Kubera, it is said. That is why it is also known as *Kubera tirtha*. A bath in it will decimate not only all sins but also will attract money, grains and wealth of all such kind.

Gaalava Tirtha

*aisaanyaam gaalavantiirtham gaalavena
vinirmitam
tatra snaatvaa cha piitvaacha bhuktim
muktim cha vindati*

To the northeast of Swami Pushkarini there is this stream called *Galava tirtha*. This was created by sage Galava. Drinking this water or taking a bath in it will give comfort in both this life and hereafter.

Markandeya Tirtha

*maarkandeyam puurvabhaage
maarkandeya vinirmitam
tatra snaanti naraa yetu teshaa maayuhu
pravardhate*

To the east of Swami Pushkarini stands the *tirtham* built by Markandeya. Those who take a bath in this will have a long life.

Agni Tirtha-Yama Tirtha

*agninaa nirmitam tiirthamaagneyyaam
paapa mochanam
dakshine yama tirtham tu narakottaara
kaaranam*

To the south east on the Venkata hill is the *tirtha* created by Agni Deva. A bath in it will get rid of sins.

Similarly, in the south is Yama *tirtha*. People who take bath in this *tirtha* will avoid the suffering in hell.

Vasishta Tirtha

*vasishta nirmitam tiirtham raakshasam
tvruna mochanam*

This *tirtham* built by Vasishta in the north west is also born a part of this *tirtham* Swami Pushkarini. A bath in this will rid people of the suffering due to severe debts.

Varuna Tirtha - Vayu Tirtha

*varune vaayu tiirtham cha sadyah kaivalya
daayakam*

Similarly the Varuna *tirtha* in the west and Vayu *tirtha* in north west are also situated here. These give liberation.

Saraswathi Tirtha

*madhye saraswatii tiirtham mahaapaataka
naasanam
ya yeshu navatiirtheshu snaanameka dine
Naraha*

Finally in the central part of Swami Pushkarini lies the Saraswath *tirtha* which dispels horrific sins. Thus in this way this famous Swami Pushkarini houses these nine streams.

*yayeshu nava tiirtheshu snaanamekam dine
naraah
kritvaa pasyechchsriinivaasam napunarjaayate
tu saha
swaami pushkarinii snaanam sriinivaasasya
darsanam
sahasranaama pathanam naalpasya
tapasah phalam
asnaaturnava tiirtheshu varaaham chaapya
pasyataha
sarvam nisphalataam yaati sriinivaaso na
tushyati
phalam dharmaadikam chaiva na yachhati
nrinam vibhuhu*

A person who takes a bath in all these nine streams on the same day and goes to the south side of Pushkarini to worship the god Srinivasa will have no rebirth. It means that he will be liberated from the cycle of life and rebirth.

A bath in Swami Pushkarini, *darsan* of the lord Sri Venkateswara and chanting of Vishnu *sahasranama* – these will give the very best of results of penance. That is the reason why one must take a bath in Swami Pushkarini which is the house of nine streams. Then one must have *darsan* of Swami Sri Varaha. In spite of all the worship done here if a person does not adhere to this, will it all be only fruitless.

It is for this reason that once upon a time king Dasadaradha worshipped this Swami Pushkarini and was blessed with progeny. Later Sri Ramachandra also visited this holy place and regained Devi Sita whom the demon Ravana carried away forcibly.

How much ever may we sing it will still be insufficient praise of the greatness of Swami Pushkarini. Its magic is infinite. So let us learn more about the stories which followed later. In the course of it if more details come up about the greatness of this *pushkarini* we shall talk about them.

Seven Hills

*krite vrishaaadrim vakshyanti
 tretaayaamanjanaachalam
 dvaapare seshasaileti kalau sri
 venkataachalam
 naamaani yugabhedena sailasyaasya
 bhavanti hi*

Suta began to narrate to the sages Saunaka and others about the greatness of this *kshetra* which has

come to be known as Venkatachala in this age of Kali, that it was originally known by the name of Vrishadri in Krita *yuga*, Anjanadri in Treta *yuga* and in Dwapara *yuga* as Seshasaila.

Since this holiest of holy places burns away the effects of terrible misdeeds it has appropriately gained the name of Venkatachala.

The holiest of these holy ranges Venkatachala are ever full of lush green trees fragrant bushes and sweet-waterd streams. Wherever you look you see ponds full of blooming lotuses, bees hovering over the waters making it a feast to the eyes, and its beautiful nature gives great happiness. In addition these mountain ranges in this holy place have groves of jackfruit and banana there in abundance.

This mountain is home to many animal species and birds. Many many great sages many many *yogis* and gods move about in these ranges in the form of animals. For this reason the song of birds and the cries of animals are nothing but very hymns sung in the praise of Srihari! The rocks and stones are nothing but mounds of diamonds *chintamanis*!! The caves here are store houses of all wealth.

Once upon a time the Mount Meru prayed to Lord Brahma seeking a boon that it should forever be famous on the earth. For this reason Lord Brahma turned Mount Meru into a golden mountain, sowed the nine gems on it, also the wish fulfilling tree-

kalpa vriksha and made it the pivotal point of the great universe.

In this holiest of the holy divine places, at one place the gods such as Brahma and others, at another, the devoted sages of highest order *yogis*, Vedas, the planetary gods such as the Sun and Moon, all holy streams, all mountains, and all such pure minds keep praying and do penance here. They pray not only for the fulfillment of their wishes but they also pray for the welfare of the world.

And then, these mountain ranges reverberate with these auspicious sounds as Suka *yogindra* and Brahma, along with the parrots there, chant the Vedas melodiously. The great *yogis* dance *takadhim* along with the peacocks. They keep listening to rendering of all *puranas* by the song birds *kokilas* and *goruvankas*. In this way this king among holy places shines enshrined with all learning and all fine arts.

The several streams adorning the mountain Venkata make learned ones of the unlettered. They not only destroy all the bundled up sins of devotees but also fulfill their wishes. It is for this reason that this holy place is well known for the fulfillment of all desires.

Granting the prayers of Brahma and other gods, Sri Maha Vishnu along with Sri Devi and Bhu Devis by his side has come down here to this place for the protection of all the worlds, which is the very Vaikuntha on earth. This holy place is known by

several names. It is possible perhaps to have a count of the stars in the sky and the particles of dust on earth but counting the umpteen number of the powers of this place is impossible. In spite of this let us try to seek certain names which announce the glory of this great mountain.

This mountain is known as *Chintamani* as it grants the wishes for wealth by those who pray for it; it is known as *Jnanadri* as it grants knowledge to the seekers of knowledge; it is known as *Tirthachala* for housing the streams which fulfill wishes; as *Pushkaradri* since there are a number of *pushkarinis* here; since it is brought down from Vaikuntha—as *Vaikunthadri*; since in his Adi Varaha form Sri Maha Vishnu stands here with goddess Bhu Devi as the rescuer of goddess Earth as *Adi Varaha Kshetra*, as *Bhu Varaha Kshetra* and *Swetha Varaha Kshetra*; as an ascetic by name Neela prayed and got the fruits of his prayers as *Niiladri* and such other names. Since Sri Maha Vishnu, flanked by Sri Devi and Bhu Devi goes about here playfully as *Kridachala*; as *Anandachala* since Sri Hari—known by the name of Srinivasa, has adorned Sri Maha Lakshmi on his bosom, and as an embodiment of *ananda* grants his view in the sanctorum of *Anadanilaya*; and since Sri Mahalakshmi herself adorns this hill by her presence and grants devotees all kinds of wealth as *Sri Saila*; in this way this holy place is known by an infinite number of names.

*bahuuni chaasya naamaani kalpa
 bhedaatbhavanti hi
 yaavaduktva bhagavataha kalyaana
 gunaraasayaha
 tavantosya giressanti gunaaha parama
 paavanaaha
 asya venkata sailasya mahaatmyam
 yavadasti hi
 tavadvaktum cha kaartsneyna na
 samartha schaturmukhaha
 shanmukhascha sahasraasyaha phanii
 devaaha pare kimu?*

“Just as the garland of auspicious qualities of the Leader of gods are infinite, the number of innumerable universes, in different ages, by the difference in perception of its mystical aspects, the names-of this king among holy places-are also innumerable. it is impossible even for the four faced god Brahma, six faced god Shanmukha, nor even for the thousand tongued Adi Sesha nor all the other gods to describe the magic of this mountain Venkata.” In this way as per their wish Sage Suta, explained the names, and the significance of the names by which Venkatachala and these seven hills became famous.

Sesha Saila

Adi Sesha serves Sri Maha Vishnu as his bed for reclining, as his throne, as his canopy and in several such ways. Once upon a time god Vayu and

Adi Sesha had a big argument as to who between them was the greater one. Adisesha entwined himself around Seshachala and challenged Vayu to move him if he could. Vayu Deva blew with such force that Adi Sesha along with the mountain was blown down to this place. Srinivasa consoled the saddened Adi Sesha that he would make him his ornament and he blessed that this place would be known by his name. From then onwards this not only came to be known as *Seshachala* and *Seshadri* but Lord Srinivasa also adorned himself with Sesha as an ornament and bore the name of *Seshachalapathi*.

Garudadri

After Sri Maha Vishnu killed Hiranyaksha in the form of Adi Varaha and rescued the Earth goddess, he summoned Garutman and ordered him to fetch his *Kreedadri* from Vaikuntha. Because it was brought down to the earth by Garuda it became famous as *Garudachala* and *Garudadri*.

Venkatadri

Vem indicates ‘all’ and *kataha* means ‘incinerator’ of heaps and heaps of sins to ashes, and hence this divine place is called as *Venkatachala*. Moreover

*vemkaaromrita bijastu katamaiswarya
muchyate
amritaiswarya sanghatvaat venkataadri riti
smritaha*

also because *Vem* grants an ambrosial quality and *kataha* grants wealth this sacred place came to be known as *Venkatadri*. It is for this reason that this god is called as *Venkateswara*.

Narayananadri

Once upon a time a devotee named Narayana made penance on the banks of Swami Pushkarini in this place. When Venkatachalamapathi asked what boon he would wish for Narayana prayed for the place to be known after him and that Srinivasa himself should make himself visible to devotees here. As per the wish of Narayana this mountain has come to be known as *Narayananadri* and *Narayananachala*.

Vrishbbhadri

In the past a devotee of Siva named Vrishabhasura, grown arrogant by his strength, roamed about without restraint. As a rogue causing distress to the worlds Vrishabha entered into a combat with Sri Hari who was in the guise of a hunter. In that terrible fight against the demon Srinivasa finally used his weapon *chakra*. Knowing that he could never escape from the unopposed weapon- Sri Maha Vishnu's disc, the demon prayed thus:

*adya prabhriti chaayam vai giri ruchchtra
sekharaha
madaakhyayaa prathaam yaa tu vrishabhaachala
ityapi*

“O’ Dweller of Highest Realm, *Parandhama*!
Please forgive me completely. O’, the Being Highest!

I deem it my great fortune to die by your hand, that too by the weapon disc-the Sudarsana! But I have a desire. You are the kind god who will grant me my last wish. You are the dweller on this mountain sure! Please grant me that this mountain on which you dwell may be known as *Vrishabhachala*.”

Thus with deep devotion in his eyes, shedding tears, with great humility *prapatti* and supplication he beseeched the god Vishnu.

*vrishabhaasura! madbhaktyaa vimuktim
yaasyasi dhruvam
girimschaayam bhavannamnaa prasiddha
madhigachatu*

The Brahmanda Purana says that god Vishnu on hearing the prayer of Vrishabha said, “Vrishabhasura your wish will be fulfilled. From now this mountain will become famous as *Vrishabhadri*.” And he ended the demon’s life with his weapon *chakra*. Similarly let me narrate to you another episode from Varaha Purana which mentions the same. Listen carefully,” said Suta and continued his narration.

“Once upon a time there was a demon named Vrishabha who occupied Seshachala and put the sages and ascetics doing penance to great difficulties. Unable to bear his torture they all went to Srinivasa, poured out their woes about Vrishabha’s misdeeds in this way and sought his protection.

*bhagavannaravindaaksha! vrishabhonaama
 rakshasaha
 sambaadhate sada kruuraha tapo
 bhangakaraha kharaaha
 tasmaadrakshaa ksharaatiita bhayadraakshasa
 kalpitaat
 baadhamityuktavaan krishno dushta
 mabhyadrava drushaa
 saraakshaso mahaviryaha tirthe tumburu
 sanjnake
 snaatvaa trishavanam punyaam saalagraama
 silaam nripa!
 naarasimhaatmikam divyam sakaraalamadho
 mukhaam
 nitya maaradhaye yaaha mithi nischitya
 puujayan
 puujaante svasiraha pushpam khadge
 naahritya bhupate
 samarpayaamaasa tataha tachchiraha
 punaraagatam*

“O’Lord! Srinivasa! A demon named Vrishabha in Tumbura *tirtha* is inflicting untold difficulties in our lives. Every day he worships the Nrisimha *salagrama* in this *tirtha* with devotion and at the end of it cuts off his head and offers it as a flower offering to the god. But surprisingly his head grows back as it was. This has been happening continuously for the past five thousand years. O’ lord save us from the clutches of this demon!” so

prayed the sages and ascetics. At once Srinivasa appeared before the demon.

Then Vrishabha addressing Srinivasa who appeared before him said: "Are you not the one god who grants all boons O' lord! Then give the boon of a combat with you!" God Sri Hari fought a fierce fight with him. As Srinivasa was about to cut off the demon's head, the demon prayed that this mountain be known after his name that is Vrishabha and then he was killed. Vishnu granted him this wish and the mountain came to be known after the demon as *Vrishabhadri*.

Vrishadri

It is opined that both *Vrishadri* and *Vrishabhadri* are to be taken as being equivalent in meaning as these two are based on the episode of the demon Vrishabha. But this mountain is also specially known as *Vrishadri*.

Vrisha means *dharma*. Once upon a time the goddess of Dharma did penance on this *Seshachala* mountain for *dharma* to prosper.

*giraavasmim stapaste pe dharmo pi svaabhi
vridhhdhaye
tasmaadaahu rvrishadrim tam munayo
vedapaaragaaha*

**And hence this also is known by another
name *Vrishadri***

Anjanadri

This is an event from the age of *Treta yuga*. There was a monkey king named Kesari. Anjana Devi was his wife. Being childless and sad she went to sage Matanga and poured out her sorrow. So Matanga thought deeply for a while and said: “Mother! There is a holy place of Narasimha at a distance of five hundred *yojanas* to the east of river Pampa. There stands Narayana *kshetra* to its south. Swami Pushkarini- a sacred king of ponds-flourishes here. To the north of this Swami Pushkarini there dwells another holy *tirtha* named *Akasa Ganga*. Take a holy dip every day in it and do penance. A great son of rare virtues, the best one and son of infinite strength and fame in all the worlds will be born to you.” So blessed the sage and sent her back.

As per the command of sage Matanga, Anjana reached the sacred place of Venkatachala and bathed in the Swami Pushkarini. She circumambulated around the Aswattha tree, worshipped Swami Varaha. Then she went to the holy water fall *Akasaganaga* and observed fasting for a year. As god Vayu brought her a fruit every day and placed in her hand, and eating the fruit she continued her prayers, a year passed in this way. One day the god handed her a special fruit. As usual, she ate the fruit being hungry and became pregnant. A son was born to her after ten months.

The one famed as ‘Anjaneya’, ‘Hanumantha’ is he who lives on forever.

*anjanaavrata maasthaya putram praapa
giriisware
tasmaa danjanaa sailoyam loke vikhyaata
kürtimaan*

Hence this mountain is famed as *Anjanasaila*, *Anjanadri*’ and *Anjanachala*.

In this way, as the seven mountains are known by these seven names this divine place is renowned as the Sacred Region of Seven Hills. In addition to these seven names, in the times that have gone by the region also garnered an infinite number of names. None can even attempt to give them a number.” So saying Suta began to dilate upon the infinite number of names of this sacred Venkatachala region and its powers. And he continued!

Vapa Yaga

Aeons ago Sri Maha Vishnu along with his consort goddess Sri Maha Lakhmi used to saunter about in this great powerful holy region. During their leisurely time, talking dearly to each other in pleasurable conversations, as they took delight in the beauty of nature, as he showed her the delicacy and fragrance of the flowers that bloomed, and the beauty of meandering streams that flowed joyously, the divine couple sighted something.

In the midst of this dense forest in a cleared square plot they saw some sages chanting the *vedic* hymns. Some other sages sat around a holy fire

performing *yagjna*. Some young boys were procuring and arranging the materials needed for the *yagjna*. In the ranges of these mountains where they saw great sages performing a sacrifice there rose a sacred smoke in the very holy and sacred region of Venkatachala filling the place with its fragrance, intensified the spiritual atmosphere and gave it a golden glow that was strange and beautiful. Their concentration intense, the sages were all engrossed in the performance of the great sacrifice. Sree Maha Vishnu spoke to Sri Maha Lakshmi about the wonderful sacrifice the sages were performing.” My dear Lakshmi! do you see the wonderful sacrifice being offered by these great sages! Look. Observe it keenly. You are wondering why and for whom they are performing it with such patience, diligence, and austerities, are’nt you? They are performing it with the intention of pleasing us both. So let us both go to them, and receive the fruits of the sacrifice. But let us disguise ourselves and subject them to a little test.” So saying Sri Maha Vishnu assumed a new form. Goddess Lakshmi too changed her attire to suit his new appearance.

Sri Venkateswara assumed a very strikingly handsome appearance. He donned garments that would impress the eye of the on looker. He put on beautiful fragrant flower garlands around his hands. He held a flower in a stylish fashion too in his hands. To match her consort’s manner goddess Lakshmi too, pretending to be a dilettante, dressed herself in

diaphanous apparel and put on beautiful flowers. With a glowing delicacy and grace she held on to the hand of her Lord flirtatiously. Both of them chewing sweet smelling fragrant betel leaves, looking at each other lovingly, adoringly, talking to each other and full of smiles for each other, they approached the ascetics.

The sages were surprised to see this strange couple of a young woman and her paramour and stood up wondering. They kept staring at the beauty and dignity of this amorous couple, and talking among themselves said:” Perhaps these are persons from another world! Could these two looking so beautiful and graceful, wandering in this wilderness without a soul in sight, be really human! Or are they forest dwellers? What of these two are roaming about freely in unrestrained romance? Their radiance is amazing. We feel like talking to them.” So saying the ascetics spoke to the amorous couple thus:

“Sire! Who are you? Are you an emperor because you radiate the qualities of an emperor! What is the kingdom of which you are king? Who are your parents? What is your name? Tell us all about yourself plainly without keeping back anything”.

Then the paramour said, “O’ sages! I am no king at all. I am not a *brahman* for that matter. I do not even have a clan. I do not have my parents. I do not have a place of my own. I belong in all places. I take many roles. I do not even have a name, no

name does designate me. All names are mine. I do not have any mean or bad qualities. We have come here to see you. All of you seem to be performing some sacrifice. You are around a *homa* fire. That apart, isn't that a sacrificial urn which is enclosed in a tiger skin? When will you offer the *vapa* in it to the sacrificial fire? You the learned ones are inattentive, whiling away time and negligent of your sacrificial duties!"

The ascetics sages, surprised on hearing his words, realizing their mistake, took out the flavoured *vapa* (the thin layer of fat in the stomach of the sacrificial animal) and began to offer it in the fire and continued the *vapa yaga*.

Then at once the paramour disappeared and in his place stood Sri Maha Vishnu adorning the conch, the disc and the mace, accompanied by goddess Lakshmi and received the fruit of the sacrifice *yagjna phala*. At this wonderful happening the astounded ascetics and all sages had a great glimpse of the great god. Did not the great god Sri Venkateswara himself come here in the form of a paramour, they thought delightedly, and completed the *yaga* with joy. I heard this story from sage Jabali earlier, and now I have narrated it to you. The sage also told me about the Kumaradhara *tirtha*. I will tell you about that also."

Kumaradhara Tirtha

"A long time ago, an old *brahman* with his son Kaundinya went around the country, visiting those

holy places in the region and finally reached the sacred Venkatachala. Once when the son went missing, distressed, the father cried loudly and he shouted, “O’, Kaundinya, hey son, Kaundinya! Where have you gone? Son! Is it proper to leave this old man behind? Kaundinya! where are you?” and groped for his son in the place.

*puraatu venkataadhiisa chachaara giri
muurdhani
kumaarassavisaalaakshaha komalaango
manoharaha*

At that time the lord of the Venkata mountain, appearing as a beautiful large eyed, smooth limbed handsome youth, was moving about on the hill ranges. Then he saw the old *brahman* groping for his way here and there, crying for his son. At once Srinivasa came to the old man and spoke to him:” O’ father! You are a centenarian. You lost your eyesight. Your hearing is also not good. For whom are you searching and crying in this forest where no one is visible? There is not a single person to be seen here!”

“Sire! You are speaking to me with a lot of affection. You are inquiring with concern about me. Kaundinya is my son. He left me alone and is gone. I lost my way and I am crying for him. It is painful that lord Brahma has kept me alive. Please be kind to me and save me!” pleaded the old *brahman*.

*tava vipra! sariiram cha jaritham phalitham
 tadhaa
 lambathe pakshmanii tvakcha na cha pasyasi
 kimchana
 atah param cha viprendra jeevanechchaa
 tavaasti kim
 na vaa purvokta vaakyam tu satyam vaa
 vada suvrata*

“O’brahman sir! Your body has withered due to old age. It is pallid too. Your eyelids are drooping and your skin is hanging loose. Your sight too is gone. Even in this bad state your longing for the son has not left you. This is a matter of regret. Now at least leave your longing for the son and be without a care. What you uttered earlier seeking liberation, I take it as being truthful. Hence, I shall grant you *mukti*. Is that agreeable to you?” asked Sri Hari. Then the *brahman* replied like this:

*ityuktaha praaha vipro pi
 naastiichchaa jiivane mama
 kintu nityaani karmaani
 jyotishtoma makhaani cha
 naanushthitaani devaanaa
 mrinee kathamaham punaha
 tyakshyaami deham bho raajan!
 satyameva braviimite*

“O’ great lord! to tell you the truth I have no desire to live any longer in this old age. But in my

life earlier I have never performed the daily ritualistic deeds nor *yagnas* such as *Jyotishtoma* and other such ones. I am in debt to the gods, and ancestors-*pitrīs*, because I have not performed these earlier. Hence I wish to fulfill all those for which I intend to live longer. I do not want to die now. I am telling you the truth. O' lord! Be kind to me and save me!” so pleaded the *brahman*.

Then the great Swami held his hand, and led him slowly to the flowing stream very close by and said, “Take a bath here and go to your hermitage.” Then at once the old man took a bath under the streaming water fall. Behold, surprisingly and wonderfully the old man turned into a sixteen year old youth. Then Sri Venkatachalapathi in the form of a young man appeared to him in his thousand eyed, thousand headed universal splendour. Greatly overjoyed at this splendid appearance all the gods showered a rain of flowers. They sang hymns and praised him. Then the *brahman* also prostrated in front of the great god and prayed to him.

“O' *vipra*! From now onwards, enjoy all comforts and also perform the good deeds which you have not so far done. I grant you the wealth required for it”, blessed the god and disappeared.

Thus from that day onwards, the water fall which transformed a ripe old man into a sixteen year old youth, became famous as *Kumaradhara tirtha*”.

*trikaala maatra yassnaati trimaasam
 vijitendriyaha
 valii palita nirmukto vajra kayo bhavennaraha
 sarvapaapa vinirmukto yaati vishnoh param
 padam*

One must be celibate, have control over the senses, and take a bath in this Kumaradhara *tirtha* three times day. Those who observe this without fail for three months regularly will be rid of old age. In addition, the body will gain great strength. All sins will be purged. All riches will come to them and so do all comforts too. At last they will become one with God, gain Vishnu *sayujya*, that means liberation,” said Suta, recalling the *mahima* of this Kumaradhara *tirtha* which was earlier told to him by Jabali and continued with his narration.

The Power of Kumaradhara Tirtha

When the gods prayed, the six faced God Kumara agreed to be the chief of their army. Suddenly a fierce fight ensued between the gods and demon Taraka. In the battle God Kumara killed the demon Taraka. Hence, the sin of killing Taraka befell God Kumara. In order to expiate for it he went to many places and finally went to Kailasa and prayed to Iswara the Supreme to show a way to be rid of the sin.

“Go to the land named Bharata on earth and the mountain of Venkata. There is a supremely sacred stream there. Every day take a bath in the holy waters

and do penance, praying in that holy place to the Lord of the Hill of Venkata.” ordered Shiva. It is for this reason that since God Kumara bathed in these waters to be rid of the sin-*dosha nivritti* that this has become famous as Kumaradhara *tirtha*.

kumbha sansthe ravau maaghe
pournamaasyaam maha tithau
maghaa nakshatra yuktaayaam bhuu
dharendre vasundhare
kumaara dhaarika naama sarasii
lokapaavani
yatraaste paarvathii suunu hu kaartikeyogni
sambhavaha
devasena samayuktaha sriinivaasaarchakomale
tasyaam yaha snaati madhyahne tasya
punyaphalam sru nu
gangaadi sarva tiirtheshu yah snaati
niyamaat dhare
dvaadasaabdam jagaddhaatri tatphalam
samavapnu yaat
yonnam dadaati tattuirthe saktyaa
dakshinayaanvitam
sa taavat phalamaapnoti snaane tuuktam
phalam yathaa

Varaha Puranam

God Sri Varaha, speaking to Goddess Bhu Devi about the power of this Kumaradhara *tirtha* said:” O’ Goddess Bhudevi! Every year when the Sun enters the zodiac sign of Kumbha in the lunar month

of Magha, on the full moon day in the star of Magha, one should take a bath at noon time in this Kumaradhara *tirtha* and practice austerities in the ordained way. The son of Goddess Parvathi - the fire born Kumara - once in this purifying holy place bathed along with his consort Devasena, and worshipped God Srinivasa. Whoever takes a dip in the Kumaradhara *tirtha* will gain surely the benefits of having a bath in all holy rivers starting with Ganga for a twelve year term. In addition, devotees, when they take a holy bath in this *tirtha* alone, get the benefit equal to feeding and making an offering with some money to *brahmans*. There is no doubt about it.”

So said the sage Suta and continued to tell Saunaka and other sages about the power of Kumaradhara *tirtha* as stated in the Varahapurana and Markandaya *purana* and continued.

asya tirthasya mahimaahyaho!
vaachaamagocharaha
kumaaratirthe yaha snaato nishpaapaha sa
sukhii bhaveth
sri venkatesa priiyataamityeva kathayan sadaa
drushtam phala mavaapyaante vishnu
lokam jagaamaha
kumaaradhaariketyeva
vishnunapyekadoditam

“Oh! How splendid is the greatness of Kumaradhara *tirtha*! It is splendid, oh! splendid indeed it is! It cannot be stated verbally. Only a bath

here indeed will cleanse all sins. It gives comforts. Such a powerful place as this is a great favourite of Swami Sri Venkateswara. Whoever comes to know about the place or visits this holy place are said to surely reach the world of Sri Maha Vishnu.” Having completed his many sided narration about the fame of Kumaradhara *tirtha* sage Suta looked at Saunaka and others in great satisfaction.

All the sages cast happy and worshipful glances at sage Suta and together they all spoke like this:” O’ great soul! O’ sage revered Suta! We are eager to know more and more about the great holy auspicious-*bhavya* place of Sri Venkatachala. You are making it very interesting and wonderfully exciting for us. And it would be good to have our doubts cleared by you, you who are the appropriate person to clear our doubts. We are very eager to hear more of it from you in the same interesting narrative way of yours. You have earlier told us about the holy Swami Pushkarini and its greatness on the Sri Venkata hill and its powers! In that context have you not mentioned that Atma Rama visited the seventeen holy streams on his way up the hill, worshipped and was blessed! What are those seventeen places? How are these regions significant? Are there more such sacred places in the region? We are very eager to hear about those places also. Please O’ sage tell us all you know about those places without any further delay!” so they pleaded.

“O’ sages who are enriched because of your penances! I shall certainly tell you about those places of which you seek to know with such great diligence and interest.” So saying Suta prayed to the God Sri Venkateswara in this way:

*Yaatraayagjnaavrataadharmaadaanaan
yanyaanyasankhyaya
tavanaama smriterbhaktyaa kalaam naarhanti
shodasiim*

“O god! O’ Lord of the Seven Hills! The power of your name is unparalleled. The many many pilgrimages to *asramas* such as Badarika and other places, various fire offerings, observances, charitable acts, offering food, and innumerable acts as those, will not be equal to sixteenth part of what one gets from a mere single time chant of your divine name, is not that so! Is it not for this reason that I have acquired this great fortune of narrating about the greatness of your name-*nama mahatmyam*, and to speak about the immortal divine story of yours in this way!”, prayed Suta and continued to address Saunaka and other sages.

“There are about three hundred and sixty five memorable important *tirthas* in the innumerable sacred places on the slopes of these mountain ranges. All these sacred places are for ever visited by all the gods, *yakshas*, *gandhravas*, *kimpurushas* as well as divine sages, *yogis*, sages, and so many and many many more, in so many ways all the time

here and get blessed. But out of all those places it is not even known where some of them are now. Only some of them are known. Some are mysteriously gone, disappeared and only known to have existed because of their names. Of all these, I shall make a mention of the seventeen important places which Atmarama visited and worshipped such as Kapila *tirtha* and some other famous holy places.

Kapila Tirtha

Earlier holy Ganga which was brought to earth by the efforts of emperor Bhagiratha, on reaching the nether world-*patala*, came to be known as the famous river Bhogavathi. In the nether world, on the banks of the river Ganga known as Bhogavathi, a sage Kapila built a hermitage and installing a Siva *linga* there began to worship the god.

The great Sivalinga, emanating a ‘never before seen’, strange, wonderful light, emerging from the earth rose and finally manifested as the self- born - *swayam bhu* at the base of the holy Venkatachala region. Sri Maha Vishnu intending to stop it from growing further came as a cow herd to keep watch, and God Brahma turning into a cow, showered milk unendingly as in *abhisheka* on the Siva *linga* and both prayed and worshipped the God. From then the ever growing Maha Siva linga stopped growing and stood as *swayam bhu* in the cave formed at the base of the Venkata mountain.

Along with the great Siva *linga* which grew from the earth’s bowels also sprang the Bhogavathi *ganga*

water into light. All the gods performed *abhisheka* to the self-born-*swayam bhu* and offered prayers to the God.

The Siva *linga*, as it was first worshipped by sage Kapila, came to be known as Kapileswara and also as Kapileswara *linga* famously. In the same way, the Bhogavathi Ganga which sprang into the presence of Kapileswara, became famed as the most supreme among *tirthas* which cleansed the sins of all those who took bath in it. The God Kapileswara who with his consort Sri Kamakshi Devi eliminating defects and granting all prosperity to devotees became the protector of those who sought Him. Not only this, earlier sage Durvasa showed Kapileswara *mahalinga* to Brahma and explained about it. This was told by Parameswara to Devi Parvathi in this way:

*aadau rajata varnamcha madhye swarna
prabham mahat
agrerarunaabham sambhuutam pancha
vaktram trayambakam
panchavarnam mahaabhiimam
paataalaadhishtitam sadaa
maharshinaa krite purvam kapilena
prapuujitam
‘kalpileswara’ itye tat krite khyaatam yuge
puraa
tretaayaamagninaa paschaat ‘agneya’ miti
kiirtitam*

*naadyantam mahaalingam dwaapare
chakra puujitam
kalauyuge bhavishyam tat kapilaa pujitam
sivam*

At its base the Mahasiva *linga* shines like silver, it appears white in colour, the central part is golden hued, golden yellow, and the upper part is copper coloured and reddish in shade.

In Krita *yuga* as the Mahasiva *linga* was worshipped by sage Kapila it was known as the Kapila Mahasiva Linga. In Treta *yuga* as this *linga* was worshipped by Agni it came to be known as *Agneya Linga*. In a similar way, in the Dwapara *yuga*, the deity of Sudarsana *Chakra* worshipped this the Maha *Linga*. In Kali *yuga* the *kapila* cow showered this Siva *linga* with the milk streaming from her udder.

We are already familiar with the story of Atma Rama who bathed in these waters of the holy place Kapila *tirtha*, worshipped Sri Kamakshi and Kapileswara, and visited the seventeen holy places including this sacred Kapilatirtha, finally reaching the pious hill of Venkatachala, got his desires fulfilled, are we not ?”, he said and continued his narration-the sage Suta.

“Once there lived a *brahman* who went visiting many holy places and took a dip in the holy waters in there. He was desirous of knowing how many *tirthas* were there on earth with the intention of taking

a dip in all those and be blessed and went on moving about. As he was moving constantly going without resting, he lost his strength, he became lean, his body became weak, and dazed he fell into semi sleep. God Srinivasa appeared to him in his dream and said”:

*kimardham gachchasi dwija!
 asmin pushkara sailendre
 santi divyaani sapta cha
 dasa tiirthaani tatraadyam
 kaapilam sara uttamam*

*snaatvaachaiteшу viprendra
 saastrokta gjnaana puurvakam
 kritsna tiirthaphalam punyam
 praapyasi tvam na samsayaha*

“O’ good *brahmana*! This effort of yours is an impossible one. No one can achieve it. And it can never be realized also. But in this region of Venkatachala, there are seventeen most important and sacred places. It is sufficient to take an ordained bath in them as it is prescribed in the *sastras*. It gives the same effect as having a bath in all the holy waters of the whole world. There is no need to entertain any doubt, whatsoever. So if you do accordingly your desire will be fulfilled.” When he heard Sri Hari speak thus the *brahman* woke up from his sleep and put an end to the thought of going on his pilgrimage. He went straight to the

Venkatachala region and worshipped in the seventeen *tirthas* starting from Kapila *tirtha* and found liberation. This is all about Kapila *tirtha*.

There are the sixteen other *tirthas* in the mountain range above.

*tadbilam kaapilam tiirtham sarva paapa
pranaasanam
taduurdhva dese sakrasya tiirtham parama
paavanam
ahalyaa sanga sambhuuta saapa mokshastu
yatra tat
vishvaksena sarastasmaaduurdhvam punya
vivardhanam
varunasyaatmajo yatra tapah kritvaa
sudustaram
saaruupyam cha hareh praapya sainapatya
mavapa hi
panchaayudhaanaamtiirthaanitaduurdhvam
bhaanti sattamaha
taduurdhvamagnikundam syaat duraaroha
muparyataha
brahma tiirtham maha hatyaamochanam
punyavardhanam
muniinaam chaiva saptaanaam
punyatiirthaani sanyataha*

Sakra Tirtha

Sakra *tirtha* is above the Kapila *tirtha* on the holy mountain. Sakra is another name for Indra. He

purged himself from the sin of copulating with Ahalya -the wife of sage Gautama, by a holy bath here in this *tirtha*. Hence it is known as Sakra *tirtha*.

Vishvaksena Tirtha

Vishvaksena the son of Varuna performed penance by the side of this *tirtha*. Sri Maha Vishnu blessed him by giving him the weapons conch and the disc and made him chief of his army. Hence it has become famous as Vishvaksena *tirtha*. This is situated in the region above Sakra *tirtha*.

Panchayudha Tirthas

These are situated in the region above Vishvaksena *tirtha*. It is said that the five weapons of Srinivasa-conch, disc, mace, sword and bow did penance for Sri Maha Vishnu in five different places. Those are the very places at which Sri Hari appeared and blessed them came to be known as *Panchayudha tirthas*. These are Chakra *tirtha*, Sankha *tirtha*, Gada *tirtha*, Nandaka *tirtha* and Dhanush *tirthas*. Sri Hari granted to devotees the boon of removing fear of sin and fear of enemies.

Anala Tirtha

Once upon a time when Agni got rid of his stomach ailment by taking a holy dip in this *tirtha*, it has become famous as Anala *tirtha* and also as Agni *tirtha*. This is in a place above the Panchayudha *tirthas*.

Brahma Tirtha

Brahma *tirtha* is situated in the higher region above the Agni *tirtha*. God Brahma prayed to Sri Hari for great ease in his duty of creation and was granted the boon it is said. This *tirtha* is renowned for granting relief from the sin of killing *brahmans*.

Saptarshi Tirthas

There are seven sacred *tirthas* created by the seven holy sages known for their excellent powers.

There are also many other sacred places situated on the mountain slopes of the Venkata hill.

Pandava Tirtha

This episode relates to the times of Dwapara *yuga*. Dharma Raja and his brothers lost their kingdom and were exiled to the forest. Bhagavan Sri Krishna went to the forest to console Pandavas who were saddened deeply by their encounter with untold innumerable difficulties. They shed tears and unburdened all their woes to Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna consoled them. He advised them to undertake a pilgrimage to Venkatachalam to have all their sins burnt away and to rid themselves of their sad plight. He said, "there is a very great sacred place of manifest power called Kshetrapalaka *tirtha* in that divine region. You go to that place, and by taking a holy bath in those waters, worship and pray to the deity the Lord of the Mountain Venkata for a year. You will see good times."

As ordained by the great soul Sri Krishna, Pandavas along with Draupadi went in north east direction to the Kshetrapalaka *tirtha* which is very close to Ananda Nilayam, stayed there for a year and prayed and worshipped Srinivasa. As it was going on

*tadaa kadaa chiddharmopi dadarsa swapna
muttamam
yasmaadasminmahaai tiirthe sthitam vatsara
maatrakam
anena punya yogena bhavantaha kshiina
kalmashaaha
yuddhe jayam tadhaa raajyam gamishyanti
kramaagatam*

One night Dharma Raja had a beautiful dream. A divine voice seemed to say this to Dharma Raja. “All your sins are purged. Your painful situations will all be eased. Go and wage a war. You will certainly be victorious in the war. Your kingdom and your kingly life will be restored.”

Pandavas were surprised and very happy too. They offered many many salutations to the god of Venkatachala and sang his praise. The place became well known because Pandavas lived there for some time worshipped the God and had their wishes fulfilled and perfected themselves, for which reason learned ones named it as Pandava *tirtha*.

*tadaa prabruni tattiritham paandavancha
vidurbhudhaaha*

and it began to flourish as a very pious place of worship.

The Power of Pandava Tirtha

*vrishabhaste ravaau raadhe dvaadasyaam
ravi vaasare
suklevaapyatha vaa krishne pakshe bhauma
samanvite
tiirtha paandavanaamnyatra sangave snaati
yo naraha
neha duhkhamavaapnoti paratra sukha
masnute*

When the Sun god moves in the sign of Vrishabha on a Sunday on the twelfth day of the bright moon, or on a Tuesday of the dark moon, if people take a dip in the Pandava *tiirtha* no sorrows will dare near them in this life. In the life after too they will enjoy all comforts. So said Suta to Saunaka and other sages about the greatness of holy Venkatachala in the following manner.

Many *tirthas* such as Jarahara *tirtha*, Valighna *tirtha*, Kaya Rasayana *tirtha* and many others here are no longer visible. But only some virtuous persons are blessed by these places to visit them and fulfill whatever their wishes be. However it is impossible to verbally enumerate the greatness and power of this Venkatachala region. There are many many splendid things embedded in this holy place. Every inch in these mountain ranges known as the Seven Hills overflows with the magic of its powers.

*pangurjanghaala evasyaat achakshuhu
 padmalochanaha
 muuko vaachaspatir durasraavii tu badhiro
 bhaveth
 vandhyaa cha bahu putraa cha
 nirdhanassadhano bhaveth
 etatsarvam girau bhakti maatrenaiva
 bhavedhdhruvam
 tattvato venkataadrestu swaruupam vetti
 kaha pumaan
 sriinivaasa girischyaayam kadaachit
 kanakachalaha
 kadaachit gjnaana ruupoyaam kadaachid
 ratna ruupakaha
 sriinivasa ivaa bhaati kadaachit
 bhuushanojvalaha
 kaala bhedenā keshaaam chit praakritachala
 ruupadhrith
 tasmaadasya gireh punyam maahatmyam
 vetti kaha puman*

It is especially known to grant a wish or a wish for perfection if one goes up the hill with enormous faith and devotion.

A lame man will not only be able to walk but also begin to run. A person born without eyesight will be granted lotus petalled eyes and sight. And a dumb one will not only be able to speak but to speak wisely like Brihaspati. And finally a deaf person will not only gain ability to hear but also to hear from across a great distance.

“She is childless. She will never be able to give birth to a child in this life!” A woman thus labeled as childless, when she climbs up the Seven Hills, will not only get rid of her stigma but also bear number of children. A penniless man will turn into a rich man. All such great things will be realized only by having a great faith and devotion in the power of the hills of Venkatachala. How much of the infinite splendours of the sacred region can any man learn about? And to what extent can he ever do something to know?

Now and then this mountain appears to be the very golden Meru like. Sometimes it seems to be the abode of knowledge, at times as though it is all diamond studded, and often as the god Srinivasa himself, now as if it is decorated by all the precious gem studded ornaments, and then with its beauty it appears like a feast for the eyes. But these several appearances are perceived by only those pious pure souls or *sadhakas* and in the course of time to the rest of the people it seems to be an ordinary mountain made of rock and stone. It is beyond the ability of people to have an idea about the greatness of this mountain. It cannot be even imagined.

I have heard about some of these. Because of my good fortune I have seen some of them with my own eyes. I have myself had wonderful experiences of these and found great joy. In spite of all of it, I am not equipped to describe them all to you, nor will I be able to do so.” So said Suta to Saunaka

and other sages and closed his eyes for resting a little while absorbed in meditation.

*venkataadrestu maahaatyamam janakarna
rasaayanam
srunvataam naasti truptistu muniinaam no
budhottama
bhuuyaha kathaya vrittaantam srutam cha
kinchitvayaa puraa
ityuktaha praapa suutopi srutam cha muni
pungavaan*

But Saunaka and other sages without giving him any rest pleaded with him again to continue with his narration in these words. “O sage Suta! The greatness of Venkatadri sounds very sonorous to our ears. We feel like hearing more and more as we hear about it. Hence, O’ the best among *Yogi varyas*! please let us know from you at least a little bit of what you yourself have heard earlier and let us be blessed!” Then sage Suta continued with his narration saying that the glory of the god of Venkatachala is infinite, and unmanifest, yet that he would explain it as well as he can.

Vaikuntha Guha

This is a divine happening from the *Treta yuga*. In the days of their forest sojourn Sri Rama and Lakshmana, in search of Sita who was carried away by Ravana, reached the divine region of Venkatadri accompanied by the monkey army.

At that time, Anjaneya's mother Anjana Devi was making penance in the slopes of this mountain. She was delighted on seeing Sri Ramachandra.

*namskritya mahaabhaagaa
vachanamchedamabraviit
pratiikshantii mahaa baaho tvadaagamana
madbhutam
tishtaamyasmin girau rama munayopi cha
kaanane
tapah kurvanti satatam tvadaagamana
kaankshayaa
tvaantatsarvaantsa manugjnaapya gantu
marhasi suvrata!
ityuktaha praaha raamopi hanuumaan
maataram prati*

With her hands joined in salutation she prayed thus:" O' great One! I have been waiting for your wonderful and joyful arrival. It is not only me but all the ascetics and sages too are continuing with their ascetic practices diligently and eagerly waiting for you to come here. Grant us all our wish of offering to you our hospitality, and then proceed."

Rama agreed to do as she requested and as he went up the hill along with Hanuma and the rest of the Vanara brave ones, many many sages visited him and praised him in manifold ways. In this way Rama and Lakshmana gave joy to all to her great pleasure and delight and reached the *asrama* of Anjana Devi near Akasa Ganga *tirtha*.

Then Rama and Lakshmana, along with Hanuma, Sugriva, Angada, Jambavanta and all other *vanaras* took a bath in the Swami Pushkarini and rested for a while. The *vanaras* by their natural instinct could not keep still and in their wanderings on the hill range and its corners found a dark cave to the north east of Swami Pushkarini. Curious to know what lay inside the cave some of them entered the cave. As they proceeded, after a while they found a great glowing city within. It was inhabited by many men and women clothed in white garments. They were all radiant and carried conch and disc in the very manner of God Vishnu. As they proceeded further in the city, at its centre they found a divine *vimana* with its *mani mantapa* glowing brightly like the sun which in its radiance looked like Mount Meru itself.

chaturbaahu mudaaraangam sankha
chakra dharam param
piitaambara dharam saumya maasiinam
kaanchanaasane
phanaamani mahaa kaanti viraajita
kiriitinam
bhogi bhoge mahaasiinam sarvaabharana
bhuushitam
aasanopari vinyasta vaametara karaambujam
prasaarya dakshinam paada mudhrute
vaamajaanuni
prasaara vaama hastaabjam srii
bhuumibhyaam nishevitam

*sevitam niilayaa devyaa vaijantyaa
viraajitam
sriivatsa kaustubhoraskam vanamaalaa
vibhuushitam
kripaaraasa tarangaugha puurna
netraambuja dvayam
sasiprabhaa samachchatram chaamaravyajane
subhe
hastaabhyaaam dhaarayantiibhihi naariibhihi
sevitam mudaa*

That *vimana* was dazzling with the light of millions of suns. In its centre lay Adi Sesha on whose thousand hoods bright gems glowed. There appeared four armed Sri Maha Vishnu lying on Adi Sesha. Sri Maha Lakshmi adorned his bosom, while Bhu Devi and Neela Devi were gently comforting his feet. Narada all other *yogis* were singing praise of the god. A garland of Vaijayanti flowers and garland of Sri Kaustubha gems and other diamonds adorned his neck. Sri Maha Vishnu's eyes rained looks of great compassion. By his either side stood *sevakas* fanning him white fans, while other *sevakas* held umbrellas. Some *punya* women kept sprinkling fragrant aromatic substances and the whole atmosphere was filled with an infinite, wonderful spiritual glory. The *vanaras* who witnessed all this were greatly surprised.

And then a four armed person holding a conch, disc and *danda* accosted the wondering *vanaras*.

Frightened, *the vanaras* in a single move leapt out of the cave. They described the wonderful, surprising scenes to other *vanaras* who remained outside the cave and the others too, curious to see the inside of cave, took a few steps into the cave, saying “we will see it too! let us have a look too,” and were even more shocked as the great city and the divine beings they saw a while ago were no longer to be seen. Moreover, there was not even a trace of the cave that was earlier there. They were amazed, they wondered if all that they had witnessed earlier had been a dream or an illusion. And then they informed their lord Sri Rama Chandra Murti about the whole episode.

“In this virtuous region of infinite piety the very dweller of Vaikuntha Sriman Narayana moves about in his wishful human form. It is for this reason that this holy place-*punyaakshetram* is known as the very Vaikuntha on earth. The power of this mountain is infinite and not yet fully manifest. It is impossible to comprehend even an infinitesimal part of its greatness. By the rich grace of your previous birth you have had the fortune of seeing the very God Sriman Narayana. You have also had the *darsan* of his consorts Sri and Bhu Devis, as well as the folk who serve him. The cave you have entered is the Cave of Vaikuntha. This place is as dear to Sri Maha Vishnu as Vaikuntha is dear to him. So that is the reason why he also likes to move about in this place. He appears occasionally to some pious souls and

some great people.” In this manner Sri Rama explained briefly the significance-*mahatyama* of Venkatachala to the *vanaras*. There after Rama and Lakshmana reached Lanka, killed the demon Ravana who abducted Sita and returned to the city of Ayodhya along with Sita.” So said Suta and continued.

*yadaa yadaa kalihi kaalo yadaa vaa janataa
girau
tadaa guhaayaam tasyaantu vasishyantiiti
naha srutam
evam prabhaavaha sesshaadrihi
vasatyasmin jaganmayaha
niila megha nibham syaamam niilotpala
vilocchanam
niilaadri sikharaastham tam bhajaamatraiva
susthitam*

It is believed that at those times when ‘Kali’ becomes active or at times of overcrowding Sriman Narayana goes incognito secretly into that cave. Thus the greatness *mahatyama* of Seshachala is immeasurable. Hence the All Pervasive Dweller of Vaikuntha along with his ever present companions in his playful *lila* form saunters ever here.

The One of Dark Complexion, the Black Lotus Like Radiant Eyed One, the One who resides on this dark mountain Venktachala, the God Venkata, I meditate on from here itself and pray to him. O’ great sages all! You have heard, by the grace of your

fortune the divine story of the Vaikuntha Cave to the feast of your ears, haven't you! All those who listen to this story and also to the ones who narrate the story will all be rid of their problems caused by Kali and accrue all comforts. I heard this from the very elderly highly esteemed *yogis*, which I have narrated to you too to my great joy," said Suta and closed his eyes in meditating upon the divine auspicious form of Sri Venkateswara and experienced an inexplicable divine joy!

*badhiraanaam cha srotraani tvatkathaa
 sravanam varam
 jadam muukamcha vaachaalam
 karopyadhyanaanvitam
 manda budhdhim praagjnataam
 saankhya yoga samaadhigam
 akarasya karau datvaa karoshi tava puujakam
 apadasya pade datvaa tattuirtha kshetra
 gaaminam
 yadyadduhkham bhavedbhakte tattatsadyo
 harishyasi
 kubjatavaam kushthtaam
 naanaarogaanapyaabhibhaarikaan
 hritvadadaasyamangadhaardhyamsaundaryam
 tvaddayaadbhutaa
 sriinivasa! bahuuktyaa kim bhakta sarvaarti
 naasane
 sarvaardha puurane chaapi tvatsamonde
 nakutra chit*

“O ‘Lord!Venkatesa! You bless the deaf ones with the ability to hear about your auspicious divine story! Similarly you grace the mute with the ability for speech, and make him recite the exalted Vedas. O’ God! O’ Srinivasa! you grant the lame ones arms for the worship of your feet, and are you not the only one who also grants to the limbless the ability to walk up to the sacred region! More so, how so many are the sorrows you dispel too! You are the One who frees the body from growing old, from frightening diseases like leprosy, aren’t You the One who removes the dangerous effects of poisoning, and grants a strong *vajra* like body!

“O’ God! there is nothing useful in boasting that you grant this, and you bless with that! Because the essence of all this is that in this whole great universe there is none other than you who can dispel the sorrows of devotees and grant all their wishes. Have I not been granted this great fortune of remembering your powerful divine stories!” so prayed Suta to Srinivasa.

Indra and Others Look for Vishnu

Once upon a time four great rishis named Sanaka, Sananda, Sanat Kumara and Sanat Sujata went to Vaikuntha. The gate keepers of Vaikuntha namely Jaya and Vijaya obstructed the great *yogis* from entering the divine abode. They firmly said that Lakshmi and Narayana are in solitude, and in no way they should be disturbed, and hence they

would in no way be permitted to go in, in a vehement manner. Thus insulted the *yogis* were enraged and cursed the gate keepers Jaya and Vijaya to be born as demons and left the divine abode. The duo, as a result of the curse born as Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipa ‘turned into thorns in the flesh of the world’ and went on a wild rampage. So Sri Hari in the form of Adi Varaha and Ugra Narasimha killed both the demons.

At another time these very Jaya and Vijaya, born as Ravana and Kumbhakarna, began to play havoc in the world. All the worlds trembled at the suffering the demon duo unleashed on them. Finally unable to bear these atrocities Indra and other gods, many sages, *yogis* sought the protection for their suffering from Sriman Narayana and went to him in supplication. They prayed aloud to him in many ways to appear before them, and pleaded him very much. Then they heard a divine voice which said, “O’ Great Souls All! Listen carefully to this! Sri Maha Vishnu is not in Vaikuntha at all! At present he is on the earth in a very sacred mountain place in happy times.”

Indra and other gods were surprised on hearing this and went to the earth searching for the place where the god Sri Vishnu was. Since they could not find Vishnu anywhere they started going back to Vaikuntha again. And then the divine sage Narada came by. Devendra and other immortals informed Narada that they were searching for all over the

worlds to have a *darsan* of God Vishnu. Narada too replied that Sri Hari was not to be found in Vaikuntha, and that none knows anything about his whereabouts, and led them all to the Satya Loka of Brahma. They told him about the reason for their arrival and appealed in many ways to Brahma for making *darsan* of Vishnu possible. God Brahma consoled them. Comforting them he said: “It is Vishnu *maya*. The ways of Vishnu’s will are clueless to decipher. None can find the place where He is. King Dasaratha who is the ruler of Ayodhya on the earth will be going to the very sacred region of Venkatachala seeking to pray to be blessed with progeny. He is going to observe penance on this hill for a *darsan* of Sri Hari. Sri Maha Vishnu will appear and bless Dasaratha with a boon. Let us all go to the sacred place of Venkatachala and let us all observe penance till Dasaratha’s arrival and then join him in our prayers for Sri Hari.” So saying along with Devendra and others God Brahma reached Venkatadri. Thus they reached the place and after taking a bath in the most sacred waters of Swami Pushkarini waited eagerly, praying and waiting for a view of His radiant appearance. Some time passed in this manner.

Dasaratha’s Pilgrimage to Venkatachala

As ordained by his guru Vasishtha, Dasaratha reached the holy region of Venkatachala to pray for progeny. He was overwhelmed with happiness to

find Brahma and all other gods and other great ascetics already there praying and making several penances. He felt greatly blessed for their presence there, and he thought that if not by his own penance, Sri Hari would appear to him by the grace of the penances at least of all these great souls and thus his desire would be fulfilled. And a happy Dasaratha began his penance in the divine place. Thus time went by in this way. On one auspicious good morning a golden *vimana*, glorious in its radiance of innumerable suns, appeared with a great sound. The *vimana* was great, surprising, wonderful in its pure white cloud like light and it was adorned with many golden crests.

The *vimana* was studded with many diamonds. It was decorated with garlands of pearls. It dazzled the eye with its brilliance and kept enhancing the joy as one looked at it.

Never before did any of the sages nor the gods Indra and others on the mountain ever see such a wonderful sight as this, it seems!

All the sages saw this astounding shaped *vimana* and — the Great One, the Highest of Consciousness — seated in its centre was the *Purushottama*. Adorned by the conch, disc, sword, and mace, and adorned by the many jewel studded ornaments, Goddess Lakshmi adorning his bosom, flanked radiantly by the goddesses Sri Bhu and Neela Devi, His one hand in blessing-*varada mudra* and

the other hand as *kati hastha*, standing on the lotus platform, his looks filled with compassion and blessings, Sri Maha Vishnu appeared to all present there.

Along with the sages, Brahma Indra and other gods, prayed in many ways to Srinivasa who showed himself to them. They pleaded with him in various ways to kill the demons Ravana and Kumbhakarna and others and rid the world of the suffering caused by their atrocities. At this time king Dasaratha also praised Him and prayed to the God to grant him progeny. Sri Hari listened to their prayers and at once said to Dasaratha: "O' King! Go back to Ayodhya. Perform the *yaga* of *putrakameshti*. As a result of the *yaga* four sons of the same stature as of mine will be born to you. Start at once. Your desire will be granted. May your wish be fulfilled!" and sent him away with his blessing.

Then Sri Maha Vishnu turned to Brahma, Indra and other gods, looked at them and said, "Your wishes will also be fulfilled because of the boon I gave to Dasaratha. I shall take birth as an earthling, as human, as the son of Dasaratha and put an end to the evil demons Ravana Kumbhakarna and others. These cruel demons will fall only by the hand of humans. It is for this reason that I will take birth as the best among men, kill Ravana, Kumbhakarna and protect the world. So now all of you complete your penance and observances, go back to your respective worlds and attend to your respective

works.” Thus he showered boons on all those gathered there.

And greatly pleased God Brahma, with folded hands, whole hearted in prayer, asked: “Father! This is my doubt. Having left Vaikuntha you are moving around here on this Venkatachala in your human-*lila* form. You grant the wealth of your vision to only a very few persons. These humans on this earth are unable to have a glimpse of you even though you are here. So bless these people to have your *darsan* in a very easy way, and thereby grant the world peace and prosperity.”

Sri Hari replied in this way:” Son! You have just sought what I have also intended to do. But for me to appear especially in my worshipable form, will need more time to pass. Until then on this Mountain of my Sport-*Kriidadri*, I shall be going about in my *lila* human form to grant the wealth of my appearance to only a few of the deserving and great souls. Hence it will take more time for your wish to be realized. There after along with Maha Lakshmi adorning my bosom I shall make myself manifest on this mountain, grace the devotees among men with my appearance and grant them all their wishes. They shall all be made to cross this ocean of life. There should not be any doubt whatsoever,” said he and blessed them wholeheartedly.

Overwhelmed with joy for the infinite compassion shown by Srinivasa, God Brahma,

prayed again, “O’ God! Sri Hari! We are very happy that you have granted us all our wishes. On this auspicious occasion we wish to celebrate along with the festivities the car festival-*radhotsava* too in a grand fashion. Kindly accept this and encourage this enthusiastic intention of ours and make us happy.” Maha Vishnu granted them their wish.

Brahmotsavas

As the devotee loving Srinivasa agreed Brahma feeling great joy, by his mere thought had the architect of gods Viswakarma summoned to his presence. He asked Viswakarma to create a gem studded glorious chariot for Srinivasa and his consorts Sri Bhu and Neela and, also to make several golden *vahanas* for celebrating the *vahana sevas* besides the exalted chariot, and to create a grand city, full of bright mansions with all facilities for the *deva*, *danava*, *yaksha*, *kinnera*, *gandharvas* who would come to see the festivities. Viswakarma agreed to do so and he completed the task in a grand manner beyond the expectations of all, thus executing Brahma’s order.

The sage Vaikhanasa, who was born with a facet-*amsa* of Sri Maha Vishnu, did fix a time—the exact time of the God’s manifestation on earth for the auspicious sacred ablutions-*avabrudha* in the bright fortnight of Kanya *masa*, in the star Sravana. He fixed that the deity’s flag should be raised at an auspicious time nine days prior to the grand

celebrations and ordered for the nine day festivities. The army chieftain Vishvaksena himself went in all directions inviting all to come to the *Brahmotsava* celebrations.

On all these days of celebration, before each *utsava*, the all-chief-guard of the Deity's weapons the god Sri Sudarsana goes round the city streets to see that no obstructions are posed and the arrangements for smooth proceeding of the celebrations are ready.

Before the start of the Brahmotsavas, on the preceding day, at the auspicious time set, under the supervision of Sri Vishvaksena, procuring of earth-*mrtsgrahana* for the sprouting process of the 'nine seeds' are done in a grand manner.

On the second day purificatory incantations, pacification fire offerings — *garuda homam*, wearing of performatory-vow bands around wrist-*kankana dharana*, and spelling out the intent of celebrations i.e *sankalpa* were all made. After all these were performed under the directions of sage Vaikhanasa, Srinivasa, with his two consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi by his side donning new garments, and special diamonds, cat's eye, emerald and ruby studded jewellery and garlands of flowers, in a golden palanquin led by Brahma moved out riding clock wise in the streets around the temple. All those who came to witness the celebrations — the *deva*, *danava*, *yaksha*, *kinnera*, *gandharvas* and the people all cried 'victory, victory to the deity' in joy!

Then god Brahma at the set auspicious time, had the flag hoisted with Garuda insignia on the golden flagpole *dhwajastambha*, thus inviting inhabitants of all worlds around to the initiation of the celebrations. On that day God Brahma initiated the carrier services — *vahana sevas* such as the Large Sesha, Small Sesha, Hamsa, Simha, Kalpavriksha, Mohini, Garuda, Hanumat, Gaja, Suryaprabha, Chandraprabha *vahanas*, and the chariot festival *radhotsava* for nine days. On the final day, in the star of Sravana, at the set auspicious time God Srinivasa accompanied by his consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi, along with his Sudarsana has his auspicious ablutions-the *avabhrudha* in Swami Pushkarini. At that time all the devotees along with the deity Sudarsana dipped themselves in the holy waters of Swami Pushkarini. Thus the celebrations God Brahma began concluded in a grand manner with the *chakra snana*.

To the devotees who had come Sri Maha Vishnu said that from then onwards the celebrations God Brahma began would become world renowned as Brahmostavas; that those who would take a holy dip in the Swami Pushkarini along with Sudarsana on the day of star Sravana will be cleansed of all sins, granted a chain of auspicious events and added that henceforth these Brahmostavas will be celebrated every year without any gap or interruption. Thus granting his devotees these boons Swami Srinivasa sent them away to their respective places.

And then a very happy God Brahma made this appeal to Srinivasa. He pleaded, “O’ God! Grant them all your presence for their own good. For this please remain here and bless everybody with your appearance.”

Sri Maha Vishnu said, ” Your wish will be surely fulfilled. But wait, some more time has to pass.” So saying, Srinivasa accompanied by his consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi vanished from sight in his golden *vimana*.

God Brahma and all other gods were astonished. Looking in wonder in the direction whence Srinivasa disappeared, speaking among themselves that the deeds of the great God are unknowable went away to their respective places. As sage Suta described the divine saga the wonderstruck Saunaka and the ascetics said this to him.

“O’ Master! O’sage Suta! the divine saga of Sri Venkateswara acts as the cleanser of all sins! Holiest of holy! Please continue so that all people may have their desires fulfilled by your narration of that powerful saga of Him”, requested all the ascetics.

Sage Suta nodded his head as a sign in acquiescence of their request and continued in this manner.

“Sri Maha Vishnu along with his consort goddess Sri Maha Lakhmi and Bhu Devi used to saunter about on the Venkata mountain slopes sporting his human form. He used to go about in

the valleys, enjoy looking at the beauty of the hills, and having a bath in the holy waters thereof. Now and then, Srinivasa, seated in his golden *vimana* named Ananda Nilayam, appeared blessing some pious persons and those sages who had enriched themselves by their austerities. He used to thus appear and grant the wishes of whoever prayed to him. In this way he used to appear to his devotees at his will, being the ‘golden mint in ones hand’, being the ‘jewel in devotees prayer-extended hands.’

As the giver of umpteen gifts to whosoever wished for them... in this way he showered his boons. At other times he was invisible or went about in that sacred region of Venkatachala in his *lila* human form.

To the One who lies on his great serpent bed as Sesha Sayi in Vaikuntha in the ocean of milk attended by Sri Devi and Bhu Devi, this Venkatachala on earth has become His favourite place. This holy region is famed as the very Vaikuntha on earth. Such a sacred place as this Venkatachala has come to be known importantly by various names in various ages— in Krita, Treta, Dwapara *yugas*, as the veritable mountain of gold, adorned by infinite number of jewel crested hill tops, appearing to devotees, giving infinite joy, and at once granting devotees the fruits of their wishes.

Sriman Narayana, perennially served, worshipped and praised as the Forever Reclining

on the Great Serpent Adi Sesha in Vaikuntha, who has taken the form of the Great White Boar for the sake of eliminating the demon Hiranyaksha, also reigns at the same time in this Venkataachala, gives his divine *darsan* to the sages Tumbura, Narada and others.

An Ant Hill under the Tamarind Tree!

As it was going on in this fashion, one day Sage Narada went to his father Brahma in Satya Loka, and prayed thus: “O’ Father! Is it not a long time since you have prayed to Sri Maha Vishnu to remain in Venkatachala and bless the devotees! Now thousands of years have passed but the God has not fulfilled his promise! And when will your desire be fulfilled? Oh! When will these mortals on earth get to have a glimpse of Sriman Narayana himself? For how long do they have to wait for such divine grace?” Narada expressed his doubts and asked him many questions one after another.

God Brahma at once said,” Yes Narada! You have reminded me well. Very good. A very long time has elapsed since Sriman Narayana has given the boon to the gods that he would be present for the sake of human beings on earth in the Age of Kali and be the giver of whatever they ask for, being famous as the ‘king of boons’ in Kali *yuga-Kalau Venkata Nayakaha*. I have also been thinking of it in several ways, and right at this time you have come to me about this matter and induced the thought in

me to make serious efforts for this. And Narada your help is also required for this great deed to be realized. So shall you be ever prepared to help Narada wouldn't you!", and looked in the direction of Narada as though ordering him. "Narayana! Narayana! Should you ask me Father! Am I not ever prepared, moving about in the three worlds, ever uttering the name of Narayana for the welfare of the worlds, Father! Order me at once Father! What role will you ask me to play in order to bring the auspicious presence of Srinivasa on earth and grant his *darsan* to devotees easily, what I should do, please tell me Father! I shall consider it my great fortune! Order me at once Father!" prayed Narada.

Then god Brahma said to Narada:" I shall create a divine tamarind tree in a sacred place on the banks of Swami Pushkarini on top of the Sesha mountain, with an element of Dasaradha of Treta *yuga*, and an element of Vasudeva in the Dwapara *yuga*. That tree will, with its several great branches flourish as supreme among the trees. Under that tree, with an element of mother Kausalya Devi and similarly with an element of mother Devaki Devi I shall create a huge ant hill. O' sage Narada! Think deeply, make your best efforts so that somehow Sriman Narayana reclining in all his glory in Vaikuntha will enter the great ant hill under the tamarind tree. Complete this task diligently and without any delay. Our desire will not only be fulfilled but also the human beings on earth will also garner the fortune of having Srinivasa

in their midst by it. They will soon be blessed with the great time of having a *darsan* of Sri Swami and be made to cross the ocean of earthly life.” So said God Brahma and created a tamarind tree and an anthill under it.

Narada was immensely surprised and wondered at the manifestation of the divine tree and the anthill under it by the Creator. He had feasted his eyes on that sight with great devotion and surrender and offered his salutations. Then he said to Brahma, “O’ Father who are the creator of the moving and non moving in the universe! The tree you have created and the ant hill-*valmikam* under it are shining with a wonderful radiance. It is astounding! But how can I make Sri Maha Vishnu come to the earth and enter the *valmikam* for the well being of the world-*lokakalyanam*? Is it possible for me to make this happen at all? Whatever it may be the Dwapara *yuga* is coming to an end. In whatever direction one sees sins are mounting increasingly on the earth. Now is when the Almighty Dweller of the World Above-*paramdhama* should make himself manifest on earth to punish the evil doers and to protect the virtuous in this age of Kali. We can only be instruments, be of some help, and it is impossible for others to do anything. I shall still make efforts as you have ordered,” saying so Narada offered salutations to God Brahma and took leave.

“When the Almighty Dweller of the Sri Vaikuntha above makes himself manifest on earth for its *loka*

kalyana, I must also be able to be of help" thought Narada and looking for a way to do it, uttering the name "Narayana, Narayana!" he went about his way around the worlds. Thus a very long time elapsed.

For Whom is the Yaga Intended?

Even the Dwapara *yuga* was drawing to a close. During the final stage of Dwapara the *dharma* remaining here and there kept drying up. Evil ways, highhandedness-*daushtyam*, disturbances and indifference reigned everywhere. *Adharma* grew enormously and ran havoc. Unbridled sexuality became rampant. Woman and riches got prime importance. Wine flowed in streams. Meat eating crossed all bounds and led to violence. Such were the days when people led difficult lives yearning desperately for the grace of god.

At such a time great sages, highest souls, the best among ascetics...many many such ones gathered on the banks of Ganga at one place. They considered the situation of unrest in the world. They thought deeply about the well being of the world and the restoration of peace in many many ways. Finally, they came to the conclusion that the best way to effect welfare of the world is through *yagjna*. They gathered all those things needed for the highest form of *yaga* they intended to perform. They arranged for the performance of the *yagjna* on an auspicious day at an auspicious hour.

As those sages gathered for the welfare of the world with great devotion, commitment, great

austerities, and made preparations for the *yagjna* there, then at that moment the great sage Narada arrived. The sages were all surprised and wondered. They felt that the arrival of the divine sage was an auspicious sign for the fulfillment of the intended *yagjna* which was bound to be achieved, and greatly pleased, they respectfully welcomed the sage Narada. They offered him water for his hands, feet and water to drink with great respect.

Narada was very well satisfied and posed a number of questions to them. The sages all praised the arrival of the divine being in several ways and humbly mentioned that they intended to do this *yagjna* for the welfare of the world.. Very happy Narada approved of it saying that it is an auspicious intention, may it be fulfilled! and it shall be fulfilled too, and asked,” to which god is this *yagjna* being offered? For whom have you intended it? Tell me all about it in detail.” All the sages looked at each other stupefied at this. Yes, for whom have we intended this *yagjna* was the doubt expressed as a question on their countenances posed to one another. And then Narada himself intervened again and spoke.

“The trio Brahma, Sri Maha Vishnu and Parameswara among all the gods are they not the most important ones! Who among the three would come at once to the rescue of the distressed ones? Who is the one who grants boons instantly? Which among them being the highest one dispels all sins ? The divine flower *parijata*, the jewel in the devotees’

hands, the knot of ‘gold at the end of upper cloth’- *kongu bangaram* who grants all the wishes and showers boons, the highest among gods!- find and know Him who grants these and then decide upon it. Because of such a god will people’s welfare be assured. Hence, decide upon that aspect before you proceed with the *yagjna!*” so saying Narada took leave from them all.

Who is the Best ?

The sages all pondered over the advice of Narada. What he said is right is not that so? For whom should this *yagjna* be performed? for whom is this to be intended? Finally they came to the conclusion that they should finally determine who among the three — Brahma Vishnu and Maheswara, is the best and for whom the *yagjna* is intended as sage Narada has said. But is it possible at all for commoners like them to find out who among the Trio is the greatest? Then to whom should the task be assigned? Who is that one who is best suited to carry this out? In this way they debated among themselves as to who that person would be to carry this out efficiently, and finally entrusted it to the devout Bhrigu a sage of enriched austerities. They entreated and appealed to him that he is the one who would complete this task well. As sage Brigu felt that their prayers are well intended and would bring good for the world he agreed and pledging himself to the task, set upon doing it,” said Suta to the ascetics around him.

Sojourn to Satyaloka

As ordained by Narada and as per the request of the sages, Bhrigu first set on his journey to *Satya loka*. On the way he began to ponder deeply over the work given to him. “What an impossible task it is to determine who among the *Trimurthis* is the rich embodiment of *sattva*, who among them brings about auspicious times and which god among them can dispel the difficulties of earthlings! And with what dangers is this task wrought! But yet in this task of mine promises to appear the great work of future good. Is it not the result of my good deeds to be a part of it, to have a role in this great deed!” Thus sage Bhrigu walked his way and reached *Satya loka*.

In that *Satya loka*, in a divine courtly spacious hall, with the mother of knowledge Devi Saraswathi by his side Brahma with his four faces in a clear tone was reciting the four *Vedas-subhra subhaga*. Also, by a mere thought he was creating the moving and the non moving worlds. Yet another way, he was looking askance, examining all the several deities assembled there praising him in many ways, and blessing them with his sideway glances. Sage Bhrigu who entered that divine auspicious assembly at such a good time saw the Father of the World, God Brahma and Devi Sarawathi and offered his humble courtesies and prostrated himself at their feet and sang profuse praises.

But neither Brahma who was immersed in the musical and literary joy in the company of Devi Sraswathi, nor the goddess herself playing on the *veena*, nor the self absorbed other gods assembled there took any note of the arrival of sage Bhrigu. They turned a deaf ear to his prayers and moreover did not even cast a glance in the direction of Bhrigu. Yet the sage patiently prayed, made several attempts to catch the attention of Brahma and failed to do so. And the sage took it as a personal insult heaped on him by god Brahma. His ire knew no bounds. Greatly enraged, “He might be the creator, he might have the wealth of Vedas, but still he is full of pride the *guna* of *rajas*. How is it that I cannot find, however much I look for, even an iota of *sattva* in him? How can he ever do any good to the world? Hence, he is not eligible to claim the highest place among gods nor is he eligible to receive the essence of *yagjna* offered by the sages and ascetics.” Pondering, debating and judging thus within himself, Bhrigu coming to a decision, and yet caught in the severity of wrath uttered a curse that “May Brahma, the one dominated by the quality of pride, in whom the *guna rajas* is dominant, not receive any prayers and worship on earth,” and he turned away and started walking in the direction of Kailasa.

Visit to Kailasa

Sage Bhrigu in a state of severe distress thinking over and over the insult he got from the Creator

himself, disturbed and restless walked in the direction of Kailasa. With the hope and ardour that the distress caused to him in *Satya loka* will be eased, sage Bhrigu went straight to Kailasa. But even there he met with disappointment ‘the star reversed’.

The gate keeper Nandiswara obstructed his way as that would disturb the solitude of the divine couple Parvathi and Parameswara, and that at such times none can go in, that none should go. An already enraged Bhrigu, impervious to the impropriety of his entry at such a time, threw Nandiswara aside and forced his way in. In their private chamber Parvathi and Parameswara who were spending time happily, exchanging pleasantries did not notice Bhrigu who rushed in an angry mood. Even then the sage praised them profusely in many ways, Devi Parvathi who saw him arrive, looking at the condition Bhrigu was in, appealed to Parameswara about him. An enraged Siva rising in dance as Bhrigu disrupted their solitude took up his trident and tried to kill the sage. But Devi Parvathi went to Bhrigu’s rescue and pleaded with him. “O’ Lord! Be large hearted and filled with kindness, forgive him and let him go”!

Bhrigu, whose life was saved because of the intervention of the goddess Parvathi, heaved a sigh of relief, yet, thinking that, “this Parameswara is full of the dark quality—*tamasa guna*. How can this god ever take the place as the highest God? How can he lay claims to the fruits of our sacrifice? He

does not have the eligibility, no not at all. And such a one as this may be worshipped only in the immovable form of a *linga* as *sthana* on earth.” So uttered this sage the curse and turned back to go.

Entering Sri Vaikuntha

Sage Bhrigu who was once again severely distressed in Kailasa, kept thinking much about the humiliation, reached Sri Vaikuntha.

In Sri Vaikuntha Adi Sesha’s thousand hoods made the canopy and his coils served as the bed in the Ocean of Milk, Sri Maha Vishnu, unmindful of everything else in those sweet moments as Sri Maha Lakshmi laid her head on his bosom and talked happily looking into his half closed eyes, kept listening to her with even greater happiness. At that instance of a sweet and solemn moment sage Bhrigu entered Vaikuntha and had *darsan* of the divine couple. He praised them in various ways.

*prasanno niila meghastvam srii
bhuuvidyutsamanvitaha
hridvyomagastri taapaghno bhakta sarveshta
vaarshukaha
abhiishtaashtama vaaraasau
nimajyonmajjitam nijam
aanandaashtamanudviipe samsthaapyasi
chaadaraat
sarva saukhya mihaa mutra
swarmuktyaananda vardhanaha*

“O Lord! Sri Hari! You being the most pleasant one, you continuously shower devotees with blessings fulfilling all their wishes. Like the dark rain cloud that showers rain your body too shines like the gem stone blue sapphire. Your consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi glow like strands of lightning in a thousand lights on the sky of your bosom. O ‘Lord! Are you not the one by whose appearance the three perils of body, mind and spirit-*adhyatmika*, *adi bhautika*, *adi daivika* are annulled, and all their wishes are also granted! Moreover there is another sea beyond the seven seas — the eighth sea of kindness which grants ‘illimitable wishes’ in which you immerse your devotees, fulfilling their desires and taking them to the eighth continent of Great Joy to give them a place of their own by your immeasurable affection. That is to say that are you not granting them all good things in life and also providing them with otherworldly pleasure too O’ Lord!” So praised the sage in many ways and offered his salutations at the feet of Sri Maha Vishnu making obeisance.

But in spite of all the loud and vociferous praises that Bhrigu made, Sri Maha Vishnu, seemingly impervious of his surroundings and the world around, giving an impression of being absorbed in the pleasantries with Sri Maha Lakshmi, drew Devi Maha Lakshmi closer to his bosom, giving scant attention to the arrival of Bhrigu, his prayers and his praise.

Bhrigu who had already faced double humiliation both in Satyaloka of Brahma and in the presence of

Devi Parvathi and Parameswara in Kailasa, trembled in great rage even more furiously like a ‘tail crossed young cobra’. His wrath broke all bounds. He even lost all sense of distinction between himself, of his status and the highest God, dweller of high heavens- *Paramdhama*.

He could not tolerate the neglect he had to face in this place too. The sage who had curtailed his anger to a curse each in Satya *loka* and Kailasa, resorted to an evil deed in Vaikuntha. In a great fit of anger he ran across, raised his leg to thrash Sri Maha Vishnu with his foot. Sri Maha Laksmi, her head happily laid on Sri Maha Vishnu’s bosom in an atmosphere of great solitude, shaken by this sudden outburst and greatly agitated, moved hastily away. And at that moment the sage’s foot stamped on the perennial dwelling place of Maha Lakshmi in the bosom of Sri Maha Vishnu forcibly. The God recovered quickly from this ominous action and rose at once from his serpent bed. He cast a smiling glance at the sage trembling with rage. He even joined both hands in salutation. In addition he also pleaded for forgiveness of the sage for being negligent in not noticing his arrival. Sri Hari also seated the sage respectfully on the serpent bed and comforted him in many ways. He sat at the sage’s feet and in massaging his feet squeezed the ‘strange eye’ in the sole of his foot. Thus the sage realized about his ignorance and his egoism. He pleaded with the Lord to forgive his wrong deed in many ways.

sri vatsa vakshasam sriisam sriilolam
sriikara graham
sriimantam sriinidhim sriidyam
sriinivaasam bhajenisam

“O’ God! O’ Lord of the universe! you have the symbol of *Srivatsa* on your bosom, you are interested and amorous in your expression and deed with Devi Lakshmi. You have taken the lotus hand of Laksmi Devi by your lotus hand. You are perfect in all four Vedas. You are the lord of all wealth. And you who are at the root of the powers of great trio of power namely Sri Maha Lakshmi, Sri Maha Sarawathi and Sri Parvathi Devi, that is the very Rama Devi, O’ Srinivasa! I too pray always to you!” Thus sage Bhrigu prayed to Sri Maha Vishnu as Devi Rama stood by his side. Bhrigu came to the conclusion that Sri Maha Vishnu alone is the highest, the best and rich embodiment of *sattva*, and that he alone was fit to be offered the fruits of the *yagjna* the sages were going to perform. In this way Bhrigu thinking deeply and pondering over the exquisite qualities of Sri MahaVishnu came back to earth from Vaikuntha.

As ordered by Narada and requested by the sages, Bhrigu who went to all the three worlds finally determined that Sri MahaVishnu is the supreme and highest god, went back to the sages and told them so. Then they all performed the sacrifice in a grand manner having Sri Maha Vishnu in mind and offered him the *yagjnaphala*. They were fulfilled in their efforts.

The Displeasure of Adi Lakshmi

Sri Maha Lakshmi could not tolerate the impious act of that irate sage Bhrigu thrashing with his foot the bosom of her husband Sri Hari even for a moment. “This fool has, without any sense of propriety, insulted me who forever reside without a moment of separation in the bosom of Sri Hari. Bhagawan Vishnu, instead of punishing the ascetic who dared this awful deed in fact respectfully seated him on the serpent bed. Moreover, he even massaged the sage’s his feet as though the foot was hurt in his of act hitting the bosom of Sri Hari. Is it not humiliating! This misery is unbearable!” With such thoughts on her mind Devi Lakshmi was extremely depressed. In many, many ways she felt that she had no longer any place in the bosom which was defiled by the touch of the ascetic’s foot. Deeply disturbed she left Vaikuntha and set out to earth.

Sri Maha Vishnu pleaded with Devi Lakshmi not to leave him and to forgive him.” That ascetic is rich in his *tapas* and he is also a devotee of my inner circle. For this reason it is not at all wrong to pardon his misdeed done in an emotional moment of ignorance. Do not consider that massaging his feet was an act of insult intended at you at all. I nullified the ‘eye of pride in his foot’ by that act and made him realize his wrong deed. Hence the good sage sought forgiveness and prayed to you and me profusely. He prayed, praised and pleaded. So

Lakshmi! please leave your displeasure, and do not go away leaving me and this Vaikuntha," God Vishnu pleaded. But Devi Maha Lakshmi, extremely angry, turning a deaf ear to his pleadings without any abatement in her angst, firm in her resolve and uncaring, left Vaikuntha and reached the earth. She spent her time in solitude observing austerities in the very holy and pious place named Kolhapur on earth.

Vishnu Deva too Arrives!

As Devi Maha Lakshmi left him all of a sudden Vishnu could not at all bear to be separated from his wife who at all times served him with pleasure and gave him joy. As a home loses its luster when the wife is away so also did Vaikuntha lose its glory and faded away in the absence of the Universal Mother. And missing her very much Vishnu felt, "what have I to do here in Vaikuntha devoid of Lakshmi." Drained of emotion–raga, he began to cry "Lakshmi! O' Lakshmi!!" left Vaikuntha, took the same route as Devi Lakshmi and reached the earth at once. He searched in all places for her but could not find her and he was tired. He could not make out where she was, nor did he find any clue of where she concealed herself. It was painful to go back to Vaikuntha bereft of Lakshmi, he thought. He felt that it was futile to enter Vaikuntha which Maha Lakshmi left. Absorbed in such thoughts and wandering everywhere Srinivasa finally reached the Venkata mountain.

A Strange Tree! A Peculiar Ant Hill!

Sri Maha Vishnu came across a lake on the ranges of Venkatachala in his wanderings. To the south of the lake very close to it he saw a huge tamarind tree. Its trunk was big and strong, its branches and sub branches spread far and wide, and the tree's shadow never fell anywhere except at the centre. For this reason it came to be known as the 'stable shadowed tamarind tree.' Moreover it also was known as an 'unsleeping tamarind tree'—*unnidra tintrini vriksha*. Shoots sprouted on some of its branches, other branches flowered while some other branches bore fruit. In this way the tree bearing leaves and flowers and fruit perennially became known as 'unsleeping tamarind tree'.

Srinivasa wandered about clueless and directionless, he was very tired. And it seemed that the tamarind tree invited him to rest under its cool shade. At once happily he went under the big tree. He entered the large anthill under the tree for shelter. Did not God Brahma create the tamarind tree with an anthill under it to serve Srinivasa himself! In this manner Srinivasa spent his time taking shelter in the anthill under the tree created by Brahma for thousands of years. As Suta was narrating this sages Saunaka and others posed this question to him." O' great sage! How come that Sri Maha Vishnu took shelter in that very anthill under that very tamarind tree on that Venkata mountain?"

Suta replied to their queries that “it is a strange tale! I have already told you earlier about it. That is not an ordinary tamarind tree. And the ant hill under it too is not a common anthill nor is that a snake pit at all.”

In *Treta yuga* during his *avatar* as Rama, Dasaradha grieved and grieved for his son and finally breathed his last. Kausalya Devi was also deeply stricken by sorrow because of the separation from Rama. Their love and affection for Rama was not at all sufficiently requited. Similarly Sri man Narayana himself came down to earth as the great soul-*paramatma* Sri Krishna in the *Dwapara yuga*. But under certain circumstance Sri Krishna grew up under the care of Yasoda and Nanda in the cowherd hamlet, and not with his parents Devaki and Vasu Deva. Even Devaki and Vasu Deva too had unfulfilled affection for their son.

Hence, in order to remove the pain that Dasaradha and Kausalya suffered in the *Treta yuga* and Devaki and Vasudeva in *Dwapara yuga* and give them the filial joy that Brahma intended to do this. In accordance with it he created the ‘stable shadowed tamarind tree’ with elements of Dasaradha and Vasudeva, and the anthill under the tree with the elements of Kausalya Devi and mother Devaki. Sri Maha Vishnu who came down to the earth on to the sacred Venkatadri for the well being of the world lived in the ant hill under the tamarind tree in the vicinity of the lake and repaid his debt to his parents.

Cowherdess! The Cow! The Calf!

In Kolhapur Sri Maha Lakshmi heard from Brahma and other gods that the lord of Vaikuntha has taken shelter in a big ant hill under the tamarind tree and that he was suffering from pangs of hunger and thirst and it caused her much pain. Even then she totally refused to move to be by his side. At last when Brahma and Siva prayed to her to relieve Srinivasa from the pangs of hunger and thirst she relented and agreed to do so.

She also assumed the form of a cowherdess. As Brhama turned himself into a cow and Siva into a calf following the cowherdess took them along to the court of the Chola king who ruled the region.

She told the king that this unusual cow and calf blessed with divine qualities would bode good for the king. She sold them to the king and returned to Kolhapur.

Srinivasa Laps up Milk!

The king's cowherd took the new cow and calf along with his cows for grazing as usual. The new cow along with the calf, following the cowherd went to the forest, began to shed milk into the ant hill under the tamarind tree. The god within used to have his fill to his satisfaction. After shedding her milk the cow with its calf used to join the herd and return to the king's cow shelter. Some time went on in this way.

The Curse to King Chola

The queen was angry because the new cow gave no milk at all for her infant son and complained about it to the king. The king punished the cowherd, even ordered him to be lashed and warned him to watch the cow and calf carefully. Fearing for his life the cow herd who kept a close watch on the cow and calf came across a strange sight.

On the following day as usual the cow slowly left the herd, crossing the hills and mounds reached climbing on to the anthill near the *pushkarini* began to shed its milk in a stream. The angry cowherd whose life was endangered because of the cow which emptied its udder in the ant hill, took up his axe and delivered a strong blow to the cow. As the alerted cow jerked itself away and Srinivasa quickly raised himself from the ant hill, the cow herd's blow struck Srinivasa on his forehead and blood trickled down. The cowherd astonished on seeing Srinivasa bleeding from the blow of his axe, aghast, blank in mind and terribly frightened, fell down dead then and there.

The cow ran to the court of King Chola and mooed loudly. It made a ruckus. The anxious king followed the cow to the place where the cow herd fell dead at the ant hill. And the god in the ant hill rose from it and addressed the king: "O', you sinful soul! you have committed a great crime. Your servant struck this holy cow which is serving me with its milk and saving me. I was wounded when I tried to

protect the cow. Your threat to the cow herd caused all this. You have reaped a great sin because of your act of impropriety. The sins of people, servants, wife and children will accrue to the king. Hence, you must certainly reap the fruits of this wrong doing. At this very moment may you turn into a *pisacha*,” Srinivasa uttered the severe curse.

“O’God! God of all gods! O’ lord! Is it proper for you to curse me in this way for a wrong done unknowingly!” the king praised and pleaded for forgiveness in many ways. Srinivasa, kindhearted to those who prayed to him, took pity and said,” O’ king! In a short while the king Akasa Raju will give his daughter Padmavathi in marriage to me. That king will present me with a golden crown. You will be freed from the curse at the time of my donning the crown...,” he gave relief from the curse to the king. At once King Chola turned into a *pisacha* and went away.

By then the grief stricken relations of the dead cowherd came and fell at the feet of the God. Srinivasa gave them his word of protection and told them that the cow herd was the one who first had a glimpse of him on this earth. “Hence, you who are his progeny will have the fortune of the first glimpse of me every day till the end of Kaliyuga,” he blessed them with this boon.

Later while he was looking for herbs to cure him of his injury caused by the cowherd he saw the

god Adi Varaha. Adi Varaha Swami had settled there in that holy region a long time ago. Srinivasa told him all about his sad plight and requested Adi Varaha Swami to grant him a piece of hundred yards for his stay in the holy region.

God Varaha consented to grant him a piece of land and sought payment of money for his hundred yards of land. So Srinivasa saying that he does not have even a cowrie shell with him at that time, promised that he would ordain devotees and pilgrims that the first worship, first offering of food and first *darsan* should be made to Varaha Swami as a rule. He also handed an order of gift written for that purpose. God Adi Varaha gave his consent and handed over the place to the south on the bank of Swami Pushkarini to Srinivasa.

Who is Varaha Swami?

Once upon a time there was a huge deluge. All the worlds were submerged in the waters. At that time an evil demon called Hiranyaksha kicking the earth in play like a ball played havoc. He threw the earth down in the waters. Sri Maha Vishnu manifested himself in the form of Swetha Varaha, tore Hiranyaksha apart with his sharp tusks and killed him, lifted the earth goddess from the waters and saved her. *Yaksha, kinnera, gandharva* and all gods showered a rain of flowers on Sri Bhu Varaha Swami and praised him in many ways.

They all prayed to him in several ways to remain on earth in his Great White Boar form and appear to devotees along with Bhu Devi, and to keep guard over the pious and punish the impious for a long time to come. God Sri Varaha hearing their pleadings agreed. From then onwards began the *kalpa* of Swetha Varaha. This place where the god rescued Goddess Earth and settled here with her giving *darsan* this divine place became famous as the region—*kshetra* of Adi Varaha. A *yogini* named Vakulamalini began to spend her time attending and serving the god Adi Varaha who stationed himself in this holy place.

Some time went on in this fashion. A cruel demon called Vrishbhasura started to roam about in the hills and far off places and harass the ascetics doing penance in those places. He used to inflict suffering on the good people there. All of them went in supplication to the God Varaha. They appealed to him in many ways to offer protection to them from the demon's atrocities. The God waged a war with him for a long time and killed him at last. As he was returning victorious he happened to see Srinivasa – his head injured and bleeding – looking for herbs in that forest on the mountain.

Swami Adi Varaha who listened to the sad plight of Srinivasa assigned to Vakula Malini the duty of serving Srinivasa. Thus ordered, Vakula Mata began to take great care of Srinivasa from that moment as her own son with a lot of affection and devotion.

Who is Vakula Mata?

This is a story from the times of Dwapara *yuga*. In that age God Sri Vishnu was born as Sri Krishna. It was mother Yasoda Devi who nurtured the just born infant Krishna. She was the very mother who protected the infant like the pupil of her eye from his infancy and brought him up. She was a happy witness to Krishna's many valorous acts of demon destruction and the miracles that he performed. Even then Yasoda was not fully satisfied. Yasoda who did not know that Sri Krishna was verily god himself was perturbed that the demons could harm her son. A great loving mother she brought him up amidst such great difficulties, worried every moment and sad about the harm that might befall her son.

But after killing Kamsa Krisna joined his real parents Devaki and Vasu Deva. His marriage and other functions were performed by both of them. Yasoda was sad because as the mother who brought him up from his infancy she was not fortunate enough to be happy performing his marriage. Sri Krishna the Highest Soul who understood her mind promised her, "O' Mother! There is no need to worry at all. If you, my mother, are sad, this Krishna's life has no meaning at all. I will grant you-you who brought me up with your own hands-the wish of performing my marriage, and be happy. But it is not going to happen in this Dwapara *yuga*. In the age that follows, when you will be a *yogini* in the mountain peaks of Venkatachala, I will come to you in the name of

Srinivasa. The Krishna of Dwapara will flourish as Srinivasa on the Venkata mountain. At that time you yourself will be able to perform my marriage and garner the fortune of serving me.” In this way he granted her this boon and consoled his mother.

Thus because of the power of boon granted in Dwapara that Yasoda Devi is born as Vakula Mata.

The Sri Krihna of Dwapara came as Srinivasa to the Venkatachala and established himself with the help and support of God Varaha. From then onwards Vakula Mata began to take care of Srinivasa’s needs and deeds, his food and in take, his hunger and his thirst, and spent her time with a lot of satisfaction.

Srinivasa Goes on a Hunt

In this way Srinivasa forgetting about Sri Maha Lakshmi for a while, found some solace and whiled time away wandering about on the hills. It went on in this way for some time.

One day Srinivasa went riding on a horse, holding his bow and arrow, gazing at the beautiful scenes, looking at the cascading waterfalls, listening to the sonorous cries of peacocks and *kokilas*, went into the jungle. And suddenly in that thick forest Srinivasa heard, loud cries for help, “Save us, save us! come and rescue us!” Alerted, he positioned his bow and arrow and dashed his horse in the direction of the cries. There he saw a wild mad elephant driving the young ladies hither and thither who began to run crying loudly. At once Srinivasa roared, “Gajendra

....!” Ready to shoot an arrow from his bow, he stood in front of the elephant. The elephant, frightened by the roar, ran away into the forest and disappeared out of sight.

Srinivasa approached the young ladies after they escaped from this dangerous encounter aghast and dazed. Are these fairies, or the maidens of *gandharva* clan? wondered Srinivasa, and he found in their midst, a lady bright like the moon among the stars, and was astonished. Struck by her beauty he lost himself staring at her without a wink. Even the young lady was taken in by this stranger (Srinivasa) who saved them all from the wild elephant. She too was struck by the glow of his personality, his tall well built figure, and his bodily radiance. Surprised, forgetful of herself, she stood like a sculpted figure and kept staring at him without batting an eye lid.

Love and Affection

Her maids who were agitated and angry on seeing them both in this strange state, stopped and shouted at this stranger.” Who ever are you Sir? Why are you staring pointedly at our lady without dropping your eyelids at all? Don’t you have any decency? Who do you think she is! She is Padmavathi Devi the beloved daughter of king Akasa Raju who is the ruler of this country. All other men are prohibited from entering this forest when ladies of the palace come here to visit the place. Moreover looking at Padmavathi Devi in this particular way is

very very wrong. Go away, go! Move far away from this place without any delay, go! What? Why do you look in this angry manner, can't you hear what we are saying to you? You do hear but still can you not understand? Do you intend live happily for a long time on this earth or not? Let the king's soldiers arrive and that will be the end of you! How is it that you do not remove yourself from here?" Thus they thronged around him, and shooting question after question at Srinivasa in order to strike fear into him, tried to drive him away.

At this stage Padmavathi intervened and stopped their tirade saying that "he is the kind god-sent who saved us all from the dangerous wild elephant. Do not throw such accusations at him. Who is this person in truth? From where did he come? Why did he come to this place at all? Find answers to these, find out all about him," thus she wanted her maids to find out. Her maids were surprised at the initiative Padmavathi took, then asked him," Who are you Sir? What is your name? Where do you belong? Who are your parents, what is your clan and what is your lineage-*gotra*?"

At these questions Srinivasa smiled and said that he is delighted to hear that Padmavathi has taken interest in knowing about himself." Listen to my antecedents. Vasudeva is my father, Devaki Devi is my mother. Balarama is my brother. I am addressed as Sri Krishna. I belong to the *gotra* Vasishta. And I have fallen in love with this beautiful maiden in my

first glance itself. If agreeable to all of you I intend to marry her,” saying so he approached Padmavathi in spite of the objections of her maids. He moved closer trying to take her into his arms.

The maids who saw that the stranger’s words and gestures were getting weird, crossing limits, became alert and tried to ward him off in many ways. Yet they could still see that this stranger could mean danger for their princess. At once without any delay they ran after him began to pelt stones and drove him away. Srinivasa who was in a state of an experience of a new feeling and in a kind of dream world with Padmavathi, was stunned by this sudden turn of events. They pelted stones and injured him. His wounds bleeding and with a painful wounded heart, Srinivasa who began to love Padmavathi from the very first sight, casting backwards glances over and over reached Venkatadri.

Vakula Mata’s Solicitations!

Vakula Mata was waiting for the arrival of Srinivasa who left without taking his meal of balls of butter. She was disturbed and wondered where he had gone on an empty stomach early that morning. And then she saw Srinivasa dragging his blood smeared, wounded body moaning painfully and felt very agitated. She approached him anxiously, held him by the hand and bringing him in asked tearfully, “my son! What caused all these wounds on your body? what really did happen? who has done this

deed? Tell me dear Kanna what has happened!” She tore the end of her saree and bandaged his wounds.

Srinivasa who was moaning in pain thought it unwise to keep his mother in the dark and told her all about the incident in its sequential detail.

He told his mother in all frankness that he encountered the daughter of Akasa Raju Padmavathi in the Narayananava forest and fell in love with her and similarly she also has fallen in love with him, and he also told her that he will not be able to live unless he marries her.

“O’son! Srinivasa! You seem to have forgotten that you are the very incarnation of Sri man Narayana. Swami Varaha brought you to me, spoke very highly of you when he brought you to be kept under my care. You are such a divine person. It is very strange and surprising that such one as you, like a common man to fall in love with an earthling of unknown clan and lineage, to brood over her, and say that you cannot live without her! Does it become of you to speak in this manner? Consider well as to how appropriate it is. Think of the matter over and over again as it befits your status and then take the decision that will assure your safety *kshema*, thereby merit my approval and the approval of the worlds.” In this way Vakulamalika tried to bridle Srinivasa’s passionate mental state.

And Vishnu as Srinivasa continued to speak to his mother. “Yes, mother, yes! What you said is absolutely true. Mother, under no circumstances shall I deviate from moral conduct. Padmavathi Devi the daughter of Akasa Raju with whom I have fallen in love is no common woman. Padmavathi, not born out of a womb, has the element of Sri Maha Lakshmi who has come to earth with the purpose of wedding me. Mother! let me tell you all about her life story.”

Vedavathi is the Illusory Sita

This is a divine happening of the Treta *yuga*. In order to eliminate the evil demons in his incarnation as Rama he went to the forest for fourteen years followed by Sita and Lakshmana. At that time demon Ravana abducted Sita. In that instance God Agni accosted Ravana and said, “O’ demon Ravana! The Sita you have abducted is not real Sita. The real Sita, wife of Sri Rama is with me. Hence, leave the one who is with you and take the real Sita who is with me.” Thus god Agni made the abducted Sita enter into fire and kept her safe with him. He sent Vedavathi who was with him with Ravana convincing him that she is Sita. Believing Agni Ravana took away Vedavathi thinking her to be Sita, carried her to Lanka and kept her in captivity.

In the war between Rama and Ravana after Ravana was killed, Rama freed Sita from captivity in Lanka. But in order to avoid all worldly aspersions Rama made her enter the fire. At that time from the

fire rose the two Sitas! Rama was surprised and shot question after question at god Agni as to who these two are, and who between them is the true Sita.

To that God Agni replied that “O’ Sri Ramachandra! At the time of abduction of Sita, I have taken the real Sita with me, and replaced her with Vedavathi whom Ravana carried to Lanka. It was this Vedavathi in the place of Sita who had undergone untold suffering in Lanka. Finally, Vedavathi as Sita thought of you as her husband. For this reason along with Sita kindly accept the illusory Sita also as your wife, ” prayed Agni to Sri Ramachandra. Sita Devi also agreeing to the pleading of Agni requested Sri Rama to take Vedavathi as his wife. Then Sri Rama said, “In this *avatara* as Sri Rama my principle is of ‘One Word! One Arrow and One Wife!’ your wish cannot be fulfilled at all. But in Kali *yuga* when I shall manifest myself as Sri Venkateswara this Vedavathi will be coming as Padmavathi the dear daughter of Akasa Raju. I shall accept her then as my coronate queen. All your wishes will be fulfilled in that way,” so promised Sri Rama. At that Agni Deva took Vedavathi back to Brahma *loka*.

That Sri Ramachandra of that age has come as Srinivasa in your midst. Vedavathi of those times has come as Padmavathi the daughter of Akasa Raju the ruler of Narayananavana. Hence, O ‘mother! Vakula mata! Do not consider Padmavathi to be a common human being,” said Srinivasa. Then Vakula Mata

looked at him and said,” “Son! Srinivasa! this divine story which you have narrated is both surprising and joyful also! That is alright. You mentioned about Vedavathi from the times of Rama. But who is Vedavathi, son?” asked Vakula Mata looking at Srinivasa curiously. Srinivasa replied in this way.

Who is Vedavathi?

“Once upon a time there lived a good *brahman* named Maya. At all other times except when he was asleep the *brahman* used to keep reciting the Vedas sonorously with devotion and attention. This man Maya the *brahman* involved with the study of *sastras*, once happened to go to a water tank. He saw the dweller of heaven, Urvasi, a half naked *apsara* enjoying a bath in the waters. The *brahman* who looked at the beauty of her body became lustful. In spite of his distraction he did not neglect his pursuit of study of Vedas. And then in his lustful condition semen fell down. At that very instance a radiant baby came from it. That *Brahman*, greatly surprised and filled with joy, took the infant into his hands. Since she was born during the course of his pursuit of Vedas he named her as Vedavathi and raised her with utmost love. The child too as befits her name was able to recite the Vedas with great ease. She was determined that Sri Maha Vishnu the very embodiment of Vedas should be her husband. And then a demon called Atibala saw this amazingly beautiful Vedavathi. He hoped to take possession of her somehow.

The demon approached her father Maya asking him to give her in marriage.

Maya refused to do so. Moreover he also informed the demon that she would marry only Sri Maha Vishnu. Greatly enraged the demon killed the *brahman* and tried to molest Vedavathi. She cursed him that he would be burnt to ashes. He was burnt to ashes at once by the power of the curse. Later when Vedavathi began her penance for Sri Maha Vishnu as her husband, Ravana the demon saw her. And struck by her beauty and her elegance he wanted to marry her very much. Ravana accosted her. He tried in many ways to seduce her and finally he tried to touch her and outrage her modesty. "You who under the force of your lust, have disturbed my penance and tried to molest me, I shall have you killed by my husband Sri Maha Vishnu and have my vengeance," Vedavathi uttered the great vow and by the power of her penance created a fire and immolating herself in the fire she thereby went into the care of God Agni.

In later times when Devi Sita was abducted by demon Ravana, god Agni put Vedavathi in Sita's place, whom Ravana carried to Lanka. After the death of Ravana, by my grace Vedavathi went to Brahma *loka*. From there she took birth as Padmavathi Devi, daughter of Akasa Raju. That Padmavathi has taken a liking for me from the first sight. She is also as disturbed as I am. Her condition too is as restless as mine, Mother!". Vakulamata was overwhelmed

with joy as listened to these happenings, shed tears of joy and recovering, asked, “Then who is Akasa Raju the father of Padmaavathi Devi, son!”

Previous Life of Aakasa Raju

“Once there was a *brahman* who became a sinner because of his relation ship with a woman named Kuntala. In order to absolve himself of the sin he went to Venkatadri and took a bath in the holy Swami Pushkarini. There he performed penance praying for god. Saddened when the god did not appear for any length of time he got ready to end his life. God appeared to him at that instance and pleased with his devotion and his courage said, “In your next birth you will take birth as Akasa Raju in the clan of Pandava as the son of a king named Sudharma and become famous. In that life you will be blessed with a daughter who is the very embodiment of Sri Maha Lakshmi. You will give that jewel of a bride Padmavathi Devi to me in marriage. Your fame will be for as long as the sun and moon last” blessed the God.

“Mother, that good *brahman* is this Akasa Raju. His wife is Dharani Devi. She is a great *pativrata*. Since for a long time they remained childless, as ordained by astrologers’ they performed the *yagjna* of *putra kameshti*. As they were tilling the land for the *yaga* they found a golden casket in the furrowed land. On opening the casket they saw a thousand petalled golden lotus and in it a wonderfully radiant

infant. The childless couple, king and queen were very happy for the god blessed them with a child. She was named as ‘Padmavathi’ because she was found in a lotus. She grew up into a wonderfully beautiful young princess Padmavathi whom I encountered in the forest accompanied by her maids. From the time I have seen her my mind has lost all sense of direction mother! Mother now has the whole story become clear to you? All your doubts are cleared, no mother?” said Srinivasa. Vakulamata was absorbed listening to the narration of the divine god who took birth on earth as Srinivasa. She underwent a transforming experience said, “Son! Srinivasa! very well! I am very happy. Tell me what do you want me to do now?” So narrated Suta to the ascetics Saunaka and others.

Proposal for Wedding!

“ O’ mother! Vakulamata! Go to the king Akasa Raju of Narayanavanam and make this request that he should offer his daughter Padmavathi in marriage to me. Mother! This effort of yours in the interest of the prosperity of the world will certainly bear fruit mother! You first go for a darsan of God Kapileswara at the base of this mountain.

*asmaa deva varaanmaargaat avaruhya
girestaat
tvam gachchadhaha oradese cha kaapilam
lingamuttamam
tattraaste tiirtha raajoyaha kapileswara
sannidhau*

*tatra snaatvaa yadhaa yogyammadardham
 tiirtha pungave
 kapileswara maasaadya yaachyataam
 varamavyayam
 sriinivaasena baalena sadaa kalyaana
 kaankshinaa
 preshitaaham tadardham vai kuru
 mebhiiipsitam priyam*

“ O’ mother! Vakula Devi! On the way to this mountain in the lower range stands the most power laden great *linga* of Swami Sri Kapileswara. Take a ritual bath in the holy waters at the foot of this *maha linga* of Swami Sri Kapileswara, go to him for the successful and unobstructed performance of my marriage ceremony and pray with devotion. You are an emissary for the auspicious conduct of my wedding. Take it to fruition and bring joy to me mother!” pleaded Srinivasa with his mother Vakula Devi.

Vakula Devi was greatly elated at the responsibility which the causer emperor of world prosperity - *jagat kalyana chakravarthi* Srinivasa entrusted to her. “Isn’t this chance the result of the good accrued to me because of many many births earlier! But I am only a tool in this process. All of it should be managed by Srinivasa himself, for what am I but a messenger in this regard?” so thought Vakulamata and reached Kapilatirtha which is at the base of the Sesha mountain. There she took a dip

in the waters as prescribed and offered many prayers to the goddess Kamakshi Devi flanked by God Sri Kapileswara for the swift and auspicious performance of the wedding of Srinivasa. From there she set on foot to Narayananavanam.

On the way she paid a visit to the hermitage of Sri Suka. Then she prayed to the God Agastyeswara. At that moment she saw the maids of Padmavathi Devi who came to offer *abhisheka puja* to God Agastyeswara and asked them as to who they are, from where they have come, for what purpose are they here, and a battery of other inquiries.

They replied that they are maids of Padmavathi Devi, that when they were sauntering in the forest she saw a divine being. “From the time of setting eyes on him their princess fell in love with him. She has taken ill due to fever. The king and queen sent them to perform the worship of God Rudra with *namaka* and *chamaka* for the recovery of Padmavathi’s health, that is why we are here, we do not know who that man is nor about his whereabouts. We are here too to pray for our princess.” So told the maids of Padmavathi all the details to Vakula Mata.

“Oh! Is it so? Then certainly make it possible for me to meet your great queen. Your princess will surely get well,” Vakula mata assured them and accompanied them to Narayananavanam. And by then...

The Soothsayer!

Srinivasa who sent his mother Vakula Devi to Narayanavanam with the prospect of his marriage changed his form and self. The god who has taken human form for his worldly play-*lila* assumed the attire of a soothsayer-an *erukalasani*. And he went about in the streets of Narayanapura crying “Liten oh! Listen! *Eruko, eruka!* I am the soothsayer! soothsaying, soothsaying ho, mother! Know o’ mother, know!” Her fully feminine charm and her enticing demeanour entertained and attracted every body’s attention.

King Akasa Raju’s wife Dharani Devi who was very much worried thinking, “Padmavathi - has some evil breeze swept over her? Is some evil eye cast on her? Has some spirit caught her or what? She is not able to sleep well. She is not even able to take food. Moreover her body is burning with fever, there is no improvement in her condition inspite of medicines and other measures!” heard the cries of the soothsayer.

“Oh! Know! I will tell you what I know! I will tell clearly what is what. I will tell the past. I will also tell the future. I will explain everything in a jiffy. I will tell what is coming, mother, soothsaying! sooth saying mother, soothsaying!”

At once Dharani Devi made the sooth sayer come into her inner palace. She seated Padvathi in front of the sooth sayer and asked her to speak.

Srinivasa who was disguised as the soothsayer took Padmavathi Devi's left hand into his hand and said, "I pledge by the hill god! I shall speak as it is as such mother! From this moment your daughter will be good, mother! The God Adi Narayana on the mountain held the hand of your child o' mother! no no mother! Soon he will hold it in the presence of all o' mother! Your daughter cast her eyes on the great first god. She is enamoured by him mother! her mind is fixed on him! He too is enticed by this doll of your daughter mother! It is since then that this fever caught her mother! What I say is only truth mother! If true say 'yes' mother! If not move your head from side to side mother! yes true again! How can what I say be untrue mother! And if you want your child's fever gone and get to live, give her in marriage to the prime god on the hill mother! Don't worry as to how it will happen mother! The great leader, god of the universe himself will walk down to marry this golden girl mother! An old woman will soon arrive at your doorstep to ask for your daughter mother! What I say is true my mother! I swear on the mountain god! Soon your daughter will be married mother! Your daughter is not merely beautiful! She is very fortunate mother! Give me an old saree that your daughter has worn! I will come again for the marriage. You must give me a new saree then, mother!" so saying Srinivasa touched Padmavathi's hand and giving more joy to her heart went away.

Surprisingly no sooner the *erukalasani* left than Vakula Mata arrived. The maids of Padmavathi also came in with the holy water and offerings from Agastyewra Swami and handed them over. Then they introduced Vaula Mata who came from atop the seven hills to their queen Dharani Devi. The queen courteously welcomed Vakula Mata, surprised and also wondering a little as things were happening as the soothsayer had said. She summoned the king Akasa Raju to her inner chambers.

Vakula Mata offered salutations to the king and queen and said how Srinivasa was enamoured by Padmavathi, that he is very much Sri man Narayana, and so requested them to give Padmavathi in marriage to him. She also made known to them that Padmavathi too is born for a cause.

The king and queen were overjoyed on hearing this, and said that it is the fortune of many many of their past lives and said that they are whole heartedly consenting to give their daughter Padmavathi in marriage to Srinivasa, and promised to Vakula Mata that soon after fixing an auspicious time marriage would be performed.

As the purpose of her visit was fulfilled an overjoyed Vakulamata hurriedly reached the Varaha Kshetra, and seeing Srinivasa waiting for her arrival said, “it is fruitful” dispelling his doubt and expressed her great joy.

Marriage is Fixed!

Soon after Vakula Mata left, Akasa Raju, coming to know of the state of Padmavathi's mind, thinking that three should no more be any delay, sent word to devaguru Brihaspathi and Sage Suka. He spoke to them about the marriage of Padmavathi and Srinivasa and requested them to fix an auspicious time for the marriage.

Both the sages thoroughly discussed and finalized a time in the very near month of Vaisakha, on the tenth day in the bright fortnight of the moon on Friday in the auspicious star of Uttaraphalguni, as being most auspicious for the marriage, arranged for the marriage of Srinivasa and Padmavathi and prepared the auspicious letter of marriage. As wished by Akasa Raju Brihaspathi gave the *subha lekha* ordering Suka to invite Srinivasa with the letter for the marriage. Sage Suka taking the letter of wedding invitation by hand, crossing the seven hills handed it over to Srinivasa. Srinivasa in turn responding to Akasa Raju's invitation sent another letter to Akasa Raju that they are accepting his invitation and that they would all be arriving for the auspicious *lagna* with their relations and friends." Thus Suta concluded his detailed narration to Saunaka and other sages.

Three Crores Of Gods Arrive For The Marriage

As Suka left after giving him the wedding letter inviting him for the marriage, Srinivasa, pondering

over it, in order for the preparations to take place, invited Brahma and other gods.

On receiving Srinivasa's wedding invitation god Brahma along with Devi Saraswathi, God Parameswara along with Devi Parvathi, Ganapathi, and Kumara Swami, and the gods Indra, Agni, Yama, Varuna and others came along. Similarly

*kaasyapotibharadwaajovaamadevascha
gautamaha
viswaamitro vasishtascha
vaalmiikirjamadagnijaha
pulasthyascha dadhiichitascha sunassephascha
gaalavaha
gaargyaha krishnno mahaaraaja saputraaha
saprograhaaha
evam maharshayo devaa raajaanascha
samaagataaha
vivaahaardham samajagmuhu sarve
sambhramakaataraaha*

And also sages such as Kasyapa, Bharadwaja, Vamadeva, Gautama, Viswamitra, Vasishtha, Valmiki, Parasurama, Pulastya, Dadhichi, Sunahseva, Galava, and Gargi and other sages all arrived at Venkatadri to witness the wedding of Venkatesa. Lord Srinivasa cordially invited all his family and paid his respects and honoured them all.

Then Srinivasa summoning Indra ordered that he should make Viswakarma Maya build a city *Kalyanapura* for the gods' retinues who would

come for the wedding. Viswakarma also went to the city of Akasa Raju in Narayanavanam in order to build a grand dais adorned with strings of pearls and pillars studded with jewels for the wedding of Sri Padmavathi and Srinivasa.

Later Sri Venkatesa assembled all the gods and told them that his wedding with the daughter of Akasa Raju Padmavathi is intended for the good of the world, and unless every one cooperates this auspicious event will not go smoothly, hence all should cooperate and take part in the celebrations of the marriage, he ordered. The gods were all highly pleased to be participating in the marriage of Padmavathi and Srinivasa and that it is the result of the great good fortune of their many births to contribute their services.

God Kumara invited the gods who had come and made the required suitable arrangements for each of them and the sages who arrived. Parameswara felicitated them with great liking and affection. God Agni turned into a cook and god Varuna served them all by providing water. As the gods were all joyfully involved in their respective works, when Parvathi Devi and Saraswathi Devi were thinking of the auspicious bath that they should give to Srinivasa, Srinivasa felt it would be very good to have Sri Maha Lakshmi by his side at this time! What kind of a wedding would it be, he lamented, it would be no wedding devoid of her presence. When Brahma approached and consoled him that it would

not be too late even now, and that one of them could go to invite her, Srinivasa felt relieved. He summoned god Surya at once and ordered, “Go to Kolhapuri where Maha Lakshmi resides. Tell her this lie, that Srinivasa has taken ill because of your absence and fetch her.”

Thus ordered by Srinivasa god Surya went to Kolhapuri and conveyed Srinivasa’s wish to Sri Maha Lakshmi. Immediately she arrived at Venkatachala and felt immensely happy. Then seeing all the gods involved in such overwhelming activity she inquired what the special event was. Then Srinivasa told Sri Maha Lakshmi that the time has arrived for her command to be fulfilled, as per her wish the Vedavati of *Treta yuga* has come as Padmavathi to be married to him. “That is the reason for summoning you here. What kind of a wedding would it be? it will not be a wedding at all without your presence!” he said

Lakshmi Devi whose displeasure was abated, now happy, was prepared to decorate him as the bridegroom. Goddesses Parvathi and Saraswathi and others prepared to give an aromatic watered auspicious bath to Srinivasa the bridegroom.

Srinivasa donning the new garments and ornaments given by Kubera in all glory, as a radiant new bridegroom went to worship the guarding deity of his clan-*kula devata* the *sami* tree, plucked a branch of it from the Kumara *dhara tirtha* and taking it from there, planted it near the temple of god Sri Varaha and offered his worship to the tree.

Then Brahma asked Srinivasa to arrange food for all the crores of gods, *gandharvas* and sages as it would be auspicious for them all to be well fed as going on an empty stomach to a marriage celebration does not bode good at all. At this time Srinivasa pondered over his condition as to how a penniless person as himself could afford to incur such a huge expenditure. Coming to his rescue Nilakantha Parama Siva addressed him thus.

*srotavya vachanam taata! mama baalasya
madhava!
vivaaha karane deva! tathaa bhavanakarmani
praarambhasyaanta paryantam yohi yatnam
samaachareth
sa punyavaan loke kiirtimeti na samsayaha
sampaadyaaha sarva sambhaaraaha
subhakaaryeshu pushkalaaha
bahulaardha vyayenaapi tadabhaavetvrunam
chareth*

“O’ Son! Madhava! From planning to the celebration of a marriage, or in trying to build a house one should make efforts until it is completed. One should not leave it midway. Completing them would be an honourable act. In case one falls short of money or when there is no money at all, even then one should complete these by borrowing money. Such an act brings prosperity.” “Who will give me a loan for my marriage now?” thought Srinivasa. Taking Kubera aside he requested for a loan as he needed money for his marriage.” “Certainly Sir! as

a person without wealth can borrow money from a rich person, as per the circumstances give me in writing that you have borrowed the money from me,” replied Kubera. Srinivasa agreed to do so. He sat under the Aswaththa tree on the western bank of Swami Pushkarini and made Brahma write the document of debt in these words.

*runa graahii sriinivaaso dhanadaayii
 dhaneswaraha
 aatma kaarya nimittastu kalyaanardham
 kalau yuge
 vaisakha suddhdha saptamyaam vilambe
 chaiva vatsare
 nishkaanaam raamamudraanaam lakshaani
 cha chaturdasa
 dravyam dattam dhanesena vridhdhi
 grahana kaaranaat
 savridhdhi ditsataa muulam sviikritam
 chakrapaaninaa
 vivaha varsha maarabhya sahasraante
 dhanam punaha
 daatavyam yaksharaajaaya sriinivaasena
 sarngninaa
 ekah saakshii chaturvaktro dvitiyyastu
 trilochanaha
 tritiysvaththa raajastu vetti sarvamidam
 dhridham
 ityetadrupatrastu sriinivaaso likhat svayam*

“In Kali *yuga*, in the year named Vilamba, in the month of Vaisakha, on the seventh day of the bright

fortnight of moon, for the sake of my marriage, fourteen lakhs of *nishka* s of gold with the imprint of Rama are taken as loan on condition of payment of interest. This is a note of debt written by me that from the day of marriage in this year I promise to repay this amount with interest in a thousand years. The four faced Brahma is the first witness, the three eyed Sankara is the second witness and the *Aswaththa* tree under which this is written is the third witness!” in this way Srinivasa made Brahma write this document of loan. Gods Parameswara, Brahma and the *aswahtha* tree stood as witnesses.

At once Srinivasa summoned god Agni and asked him to arrange food for every body. On this command from Srinivasa god Agni treating Swami Pushkarini as the rice bowl, Papanasana *tirtha* as dhal bowl, Akasaganga as *payasa* bowl, Deva *tirtha* as vegetable bowl, Tumburu *tirtha* as *chitraranna* bowl, Kumaradhara *tirtha* as *bhakshya* bowl, Pandava *tirtha* as *charu* bowl, the rest as pickles and other condiment bowls, prepared tasty divine dishes out of fresh materials. All these were offered to the god of Ahobila Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swami and then food was served to all the gods who sat in several rows from the region of Pandava *tirtha* up to the Sri Saila.

In this way Srinivasa treated everybody to a sumptuous meal with the amount of money borrowed from Kubera. After the feast was over Srinivasa the bridegroom along with *deva*, *yaksha*,

gandhrava and *rishis* started to go to Narayanavana. A devout Akasa Raju welcomed everybody respectfully and invited them in a grand way. As per their status he arranged for them to retire to their respective places. He arranged a tasty grand sumptuous feast for them all.

The Wedding of Sri Padmavathi and Srinivasa

That evening Akasa Raju accompanied by his wife Dharani Devi offered his devotional worship to Sri Hari—his son in law to be. He washed the divine feet of Srinivasa and sprinkled that water over their heads.

Akasa Raju and his wife Dharani Devi prayed and worshipped the age old hero, the best of men in several ways with care, offered him aromatic spiced betel leaves. Then with the chanting of Vedas and to the accompaniment of auspicious musical instruments preceded by all the gods, Akasa Raju seated his son in law Srinivasa on the emperor's royal elephant and led him respectfully into the royal palace. He seated Srinivasa on a jewel studded throne on a four pillared radiant dais in the palace.

By then Padmavathi Devi the bride was also adorned with a number of bejewelled ornaments. Herself a gem, Padmavathi Devi the bride was decorated with several ornaments from foot to head and her left cheek was touched with a black dot to ward off evil eye. Under the careful guidance of 'happily married women' Padmavathi Devi

worshipped goddess Gauri as auspicious music was being played.

The hour of the wedding event approached as Narada, Tumbura and the divine sages sang, as *yaksha*, *kinnara*, *garuda* and *gandharvas* sang auspicious lyrics sonorously, as Vedic chanting went on, musical instruments played sweetly at this good time. On that auspicious occasion as all the worlds moved in to witness and enjoy the beautiful wedding of Padmavathi and Srinivasa celebrated for the well being of the world, Akasa Raju offered a number of gifts to Srinivasa at the time of offering the bride.

*kanyaaa pradaana samaye dakshinaam raja
sattamaha
koti sankhyaa nishka punjaan
dattavanvenkatesituhu
kiriitam satabhaaram tu kanthikaamapi
taavatiim
punarekam tadhardham cha tadhardham
chaiva kanthikaam
padakaani sadau saptaanarghyanyatha
nripottamaha
maalikaanaam mauktikaanaamcha bhuja
bhushana yugmakam
karna bhushau mauktikaadhyavamsa
paryanta lambinaiu
kankane ratna maanikya vajra vaidurya
nirmite
dwatrimsimssatbhaara samyukte anarghe
dattvaan nripaha*

naaga bhhuushana yugmamcha baahu
puuradikaam stathaa
bhushanaanaguliiyamscha dasaanaam
viiramudrikaam
kati suutram swarna mayam varavajra
samanvitam
ekaadasa satii bhaaram bahuratna
samanvitam
paadukecha tato raajaa dattavaan
madhughaatine
dadau bhojanapaatram cha shashti
bhaarayutam prabhoh
laghupatra samopetam brihatpaatramapaam
tathaa
kambalaanaam chatushashthim dattvaanraaja
sattamaha

On the happy occasion of the marriage ceremony of Padmavathi and Srinivasa, Akasa Raju gifted a mound of one crore coins *nishkas* to Srinivasa. And he also presented a golden crown—*satabhara*, a necklace of the same weight, another neck ornament half of its weight, and yet another one again that weighs half of it as gifts to his son in law. He also gifted strings of pearls, shoulder ornaments, pearl studded ear ornaments, thirty two studded circular wrist ornaments *bhara manikya*, two serpent shaped ornaments, ten finger rings, diamond studded pelvic girdle and golden slippers to Srinivasa. In addition he also presented a golden plate for taking food, and two golden water pots,

along with sixty four precious carpets-*ratna kamballu*.

Akasa Raju also added radiant clothes, nine gem stone studded golden chains, a diamond studded armour, and many other gemstone *marakata manikya* studded jewellery to Srinivasa and then gave away the fully bejewelled Padmavathi Devi in a grand and spectacular impressive manner.

*atri gotra samudbhutaam suviirasya
prapautrikaam
sudharmanastu pautriim cha
putriimaakaasa bhuupateh
tvamangiikuru govinda! kanyaam
kamalalochanaam
evamukte mahaaraajo mudaa ratnambaram
dadau*

The great grand daughter of emperor Suvira of Atri *gotra*, the grand daughter of king Sudharma, and the fully bejeweled and decorated jewel of a daughter of Akasa Raju named Padmavathi, O Govinda! we gift to you. We pray to you to accept her, wholeheartedly, with pleasure as your wedded wife,” spoke Devaguru Brihaspati explaining Padmavathi Devi’s lineage on behalf of Akasa Raju.

On behalf of Srinivasa sage Vasishta as *purohita* spelt out the lineage of Swami Srinivasa in this way.

*prapautrasya yayaatestu pautrasyaamita
 tejasaha
 suurasenasya raajendra! vasudevasya
 bhuupateh
 putrasya vekatesasya gotre vaasishta
 sangnjake
 jaatasyaatri kulotpannaam kanyaam
 kanaka bhuushitaam
 grahiisyaamo vayam raajan tava putriim
 nruopottama
 kanyavara pravaryor ityuchcharitayo ratha
 dharanyaa saha rajendraha kanyaam daana
 paraayanaha
 prahrishtha hridayaha praaha sriinivaasam
 paraatparam a*

“Sri Venkateswara the great grandson of the very glorious king Yayati, the grandson of king Surasena and the son of king Vasudeva of the lineage of Vasishta *gotra* (but in Tirumala Srinivasa is said to belong to the lineage of Bharadwaja in the initial daily rituals) is ready to accept your gold ornament decorated daughter! O’ king! We are greatly pleased to accept this jewel of a virgin whom, as father, you are presenting in the happiest fashion to Srinivasa the *paratpara!*” uttered sage Vasishtha with great joy.

Akasa Raju brought the fully decorated Padmavathi along to Srinivasa

*kanyamimam pradaasyaami grihaana
 purushottama!
 ityuktvaa praakshipadraajaa dharanyaa
 sraavitaam tada*

*mantrapuutaam swaami tiirtha dhaaraam
sakanakaam kare
dakshine srinivaasasya dadau
padmavathiim tataha
vidhaanamcha tataschakre
raajendrassapurohitaha
puujatitvaa jagannaatham gandha
vastraanu lepanaih
kankanam bandhayamaasa vaasudeva
karaambuje
padmaavatyah karaambhoje
bandhayatkankanam
tadhaa maangalya suutrasya bandham
vaivaahikam tadaa
sriinivaasena devenaakaarayatsa purohitaha*

and to mystic incantations placed in the right palm of his son in law's hand the right hand of the Mother of pouring the waters of Swami Pushkarini, in giving away the radiant Padmavathi who was fully decorated with all ornaments. In that happy auspicious moment he also presented sandal wood paste and garments to the lord of the world.

Then Brihaspathi made the new bride and groom tie the holy ritualistic symbolic threads around their wrists. Then at the ordained time –

*savitrivacha kalyaani bahuputravathii
bhava
sarvalokasya jananii bhava mangala
daayinii*

As the happily married women showered blessings singing auspicious songs, as great souled *brahmans* recited vedic verses, in the bright fortnight of Vaisakha, on the tenth day a Friday, under the Uttara Phalguni star, lord Srinivasa tied the most holy auspicious *sutra* around Padmavathi Devi's neck. At that moment as the lord and leader of the innumerable worlds tied the knot around Padmavathi s' neck, three crores of divine beings, Sanaka Sananda and all the many many more other sages showered a rain of flowers on them. Then the bride and groom poured *sesalu* of pearls over each other's head. In this fashion the marriage of Sri Padmavathi and Srinivasa was concluded giving a joyful feast for the eyes. Then Vasishta made the new bride and groom perform *nakavalli*, *lajahomam* and other Vedic rituals in the specified way as per the Yajur vedic verses. All those who attended the marriage had feasted sumptuously on that occasion. They also received presents.

At this time of wedding Akasa Raju felicitated *brahmans* with sandal paste and gave them huge amounts of money and 'betel leaves' as it is the custom. He gave away cows. he gave away all that they desired. In this fashion the marriage celebrations of Padmavathi and Srinivasa went on in the most fabulous fashion for five days." So said Suta and experienced a divine inexplicable joy narrating about the marriage celebrations of Padmavathi and Srinivasa in a 'not before and never after' fashion.

Pilgrimage is Forbidden

All the *yaksha, gandharva, kinnera kimpurusha*, the divine beings Brahma, and others, sages, ascetics, *yogis* and the many others who had come to the fabulously celebrated wedding, performed for the welfare of the world, had taken tasty sumptuous bounteous meals. They received many kinds of gifts in return, bubbling with joy they went back to their respective worlds. Later Akasa Raju making all felicitations as befits an emperor bid a courteous farewell to his son in law. He sent daughter Padmavathi along with his son in law giving her many presents and advice as to the manner which brings honour to the house of her parents and that of her in laws in conducting herself.

The newly weds Padmavathi and Srinivasa going back to Venkatadri from Narayananavanam saw many beautiful forests and hermitages of great sages. On the way, they reached the hermitage of great ascetic *kumbhasambhava* Agastya on the banks of Suvarnamukhari river. The great ascetic welcomed them and took care of them by offering them rest and food. He said to Srinivasa, "Son! Srinivasa! Custom states that the newly wedded couple should not go on pilgrimage nor visit a holy place. According to that rule you should not go back to the sacred place of Adi Varaha *kshetra*. For this reason the two of you remain here in this hermitage for some time (for six months) thereby giving us too the wealth

of your presence, and give us joy, I pray”, he appealed.

Srinivasa agreed to that and decided to remain in the hermitage for some time. Devi Lakshmi was satisfied that in her absence Padmavathi the wife would give Srinivasa company. Considering that Srinivasa would have the company of Padmavathi by his side Sri Maha Lakshmi went back to Kolhapuri. Then Vakula Mata too told Padmavathi and Srinivasa to remain here for six months as ordained by sage Agastya, and then come back to the Tirumala hill. Until then she said she would wait for them and took leave of them.

Half for Each

After a while Akasa Raju who had taken ill due to old age left to the heavenly abode. That is it! For the sake of securing the kingdom Todaman-the brother of Akasa Raju and the son of Akasa Raju both began to fight. Each challenged the other. Finally they went into a war. Vasudana, brother of Padmavathi Devi and the brother in law of Srinivasa, requested Srinivasa to fight on his side, Padmavathi Devi too requested Srinivasa to help her brother only so that he would come to power. On the other hand Akasa Raju’s brother Tondaman also prayed to Sri Venkateswara very much to give his support to himself only. Srinivasa who heard both the pleas decided to stand by his brother in law Vasudana and fight the war. But Tondaman also being his

devotee he lent him his conch and disc, and then fought in the war. There was a severe clash of armies. Tondaman using the disc caused a serious injury to Srinivasa. Srinivasa fell unconscious because of it. On hearing that Srinivasa fell unconscious in the battlefield a greatly agitated Padmavathi rushed to her husband. She comforted him and brought him back to consciousness. At last Srinivasa divided the kingdom into two equal halves and gave half each to Vasudana and Tondaman. In this way Srinivasa compromised them both and went back to the hermitage of Agastya accompanied by Padmavathi.

Tondaman Visits Srinivasa

Tondaman who felt that the kingdom was divided and has come under his rule only because of the immense kindness of Srinivasa, came to visit him with great devotion and *prapatti* and prayed to him in many ways. Utterly stricken by guilt he beseeched the forgiveness of Srinivasa for the heinous act of attacking the lord with the very disc he had given for the war, and that his sin will not be washed away by the severest of punishments. He gave the conch and disc Srinivasa had lent as aid and requested him to take them back. But Srinivasa dispelled the pain by saying, “you have not done anything wrong, you only did your duty in the battle field. And you have done no wrong in using the disc against me. Taking back the weapons once given will never be, and I shall not hold the conch and disc till the end of

Kaliyuga. Hence, let them be with you!” he ordered. And further added.

“O’ emperor Tondaman! You, your brother are very dear to me, and close relations of mine. You are not only my relations but my most beloved devotees also. Your brother Akasa Raju gave his daughter Padmavathi in marriage to me made me a householder. I have a wife because of his kindness. Akasa Raju has merited fame that will last as long as the sun and moon. Not only fame he also attained the highest place. I am a householder without a house now. O’ king! Lord Tondaman! Are you not my younger father in law! Your brother has given me a wife. So you must build a house for me and provide a place of permanence. My wish is that you will soon fulfill it! “Srinivasa ordered Tondaman.

“Should you say it Lord! Srinivasa! You are the leader of this vast great universe-*akhlandakoti brahmanda*. The bestower of desired wishes! Retriever from dangers! The cause for the welfare of world! For you who are all these, what great fortune it is for me to build a habitat for you, O’ lord! You are only assigning this work to me out of your immense kindness for me for what is it that you do not have! lord!. My life has become completely fulfilled. My life is blessed. I am vastly grateful to you for your kindness O’ god! Now where shall I have this house you desire built? How should it be built? What facilities should it have? How many door ways should be in it? Let me know all these

fully lord! Certainly by your grace will I be able to build this house for you,” Tondaman submitted in all obedience to Srinivasa offering his salutations.

Lord Srinivasa was very pleased by this, and said, “O’ king! You build a suitable great dwelling place for me taking the permission from Swami Varaha in the Varaha *kshetra*.”

This dwelling should have two towers facing east. There should be three compounds built around the dwelling. It should have seven doorways for entering, a flag post, have a court hall and another one for *yagas*, planned and built adhering to all the rules of *vastu*, glorious in all aspects, and have Ananda Nilayam as its golden central point. Offer it to me and make your life fulfilled,” Srinivasa said affectionately to Akasa Raju.

As ordered by Srinivasa Tondaman built a great palace. He also had mountain steps carved to Venkatadri for the convenience of devotees who come for a *darsan* of Srinivasa. Here and there in between he had built resting places, and water tanks also built by their side. When everything was ready he offered the glorious dwelling Ananda Nilaya *vimana* to Srinivasa with great devotion.

Sri Venkateswara was pleased on seeing the temple offered by emperor Tondaman to him. He looked at the place which had a kitchen, a granary, a hall for *yaga*, houses for safe keeping of ornaments and money and said, “O’ emperor! This palace you

have built for me is glorious-*divyam*. But the water source Sri *Tirtha* and Bhu *Tirthas* which have vanished have to be renewed and rebuilt. You built them in your previous birth. But these have lain buried in earth in course of time.” Hearing this Tondaman was overwhelmed with surprise and happiness and stared strangely at the god. How and in what manner did he have them built earlier? He prayed to the lord with devotion and *prapatti* to tell him about the wells of Sri *Tirtha* and Bhu *Tirtha*. So Sri Hari began to explain about these.

Rangadasu - the Crown Jewel Among Devotees

The dweller of Sri Vaikuntha, Sri Maha Vishnu, with Sri Devi and Bhu Devi by his side, in his *lila* human form used to move about in these great mountains. Once when they were in such a saunter, Sri Devi created one water source and Bhu Devi another for preparation of Sri Hari’s food offerings. These became famous as Sri *tirtha* and Bhu *tirtha*. Thousands of years rolled by and as the age of Kali began both the holy *tirthas* were lost sight of.

Then after a long time a Vaikhanasa *brahman* and a great devotee of Sri Krishna did penance for Sri Maha Vishnu. Pleased Sri Hari appeared and asked him to make a wish for a boon. The very elated *brahman* prayed, “O, God! Please take my offerings everyday in this form in which you have appeared to me as Sri Krishna.”

Sri Hari on hearing this was touched by his devotion.” O’ the best one among *brahmans*! Go to Venkatachala. There Sri Krishna is called by the name of Govinda. Govinda is the name by which my incarnation as Sri Krishna is known. Go to that place and worship me and make offerings of food and other such things. On the way you will come across a devotee named Rangadasu. He will help you in gathering things needed for your worship and for the offerings. Hence ask him to come along with you to Venkatadri. Your desire will be fulfilled and your life will become meaningful in the course of time,” promised the god.

It made Gopinatha happy and he in his pilgrimage to the sacred Venkatachala took Rangadasu along. And that Ranga dasu built two wells to grow a flower garden and a basil garden-*tulasi vana* for the worship of Sri Swami. The long hidden Sri *Tirtha* and Bhu *Tirtha* by god’s grace once again came to life.

Gopinatha used the waters from Sri *Tirtha* for the food offerings and holy ablutions and worship of the god, while Rangadasu fetched *sampenga*, *ganneru*, *mandara*, *jaji*, *malle* and *chemanti* and other flowers with great devotion for offering to the god. The worship of Srinivasa went on without interruption or hitch for some time.

One day as Rangadasu was gathering flowers his glance fell on the *gandharva* who was enjoying

himself with his wives in the pond. Looking at the *gandharva*'s attractive personality and the otherworldly beauty of his wives without batting an eyelid created a flutter in Rangadasu's mind and resulted in a distraction-*bhrama*.” Ah! This king! what virtues has he gathered! How he enjoys himself and his wealth! What pleasure he derives from his wives!”, he thought and was very much disturbed in mind. As he was struck and surprised by the impressive pleasure of the *gandharvas*, he was delayed in gathering of flowers for worship. After a while, realizing his lapse, he quickly took a bath and took the flowers for worship. An angry Gopinatha cursed him that he should be born in the nether world. Sri Hari appeared before a repentant Rangadasu. He consoled Rangadasu and said, “O' Rangadasa! You are a very good devotee of mine. I absolve you of your sins. With a clear intention in mind-*sankalpa* take a bath in the *pushkarini* and offer your sins at my feet. Then like the *gandharva* whom you have seen you will enjoy all the pleasures of body and wealth and reach me. The Rangadasu of those times is none but yourself. Hence O' king! Renovate the wells you had dug in earlier life and have them rebuilt now,” ordered Srinivasa.

Tondaman was surprised on hearing about the happenings of his earlier birth, renovated the Sri *Tirtha*, had a protective stone structure built around and had it also plated with gold. It is since known as the ‘golden well’. Similarly, he had built steps going

down to the Bhu *Tirtha* as well and grew a flower garden with its waters. In this way both the Sri and Bhu *Tirthas* acquired a prominent place in the service of the god.”

Entering the Ananda Nilayam

As ordained by Swami Sri Venkateswara Tondaman had built a most fabulous and divine palace, beautiful in all aspects. The auspicious time for Srinivasa to enter Ananda Nilayam was fixed so that he would be there in order to protect his devotees. Brahma and other gods, Vasishta and the sages, yogis, and ascetics of high order, many many and so many more of them ... reached the sacred Venkatadri. As auspicious musical instruments were being played at that divine moment, Vedic pundits recited the Vedas in a rhythmic and sonorously set tone, the gods showered flowers on a radiant Srinivasa followed by the royal insignias of an umbrella and ceremonial fans. At that auspicious time the devout Tondaman bade Padmavathi and Srinivasa enter the Ananda Nilayam which he had built for them. From that day onwards the dwelling **place of the God became renowned by the glorious name of Ananda Nilayam** of great power, where Srinivasa imparting all happiness fulfilled people’s wishes by his presence.

Brahma Akhandam

At that auspicious time of Srinivasa’s entering Ananda Nilayam, god Brahma lighted two great

lamps. These two lamps are famously known as *Akhanda dipam*. After lighting them Brahma prayed thus to Srinivasa: “O’ lord Srinivasa! May these lamps lighted by me continue to glow continuously until the very end of Kaliyuga, and pray to you to shower your boons on devotees ‘being a knot of gold at the corner end of upper cloth’- *kongubangaram* as per the famous saying *kalau venkata nayakaha!* Venkatachalapathi consenting to Brahma’s prayer granted that the lights would continue to glow till the end of Kali *yuga*, and at the end of Kaliyuga they will rest, “until then I will continue to grant devotees their wishes, only then I will go back to Vaikuntha after which Ananda Nilayam too will disappear,” he told Brahma and others. Then he ordered god Brahma to have celebrations with various *vahana sevas* for the well being of the world and for the welfare of people, which should end with the ritualistic bringing down of the hoisted flag. At once god Brahma summoned Tondaman to request Viswakarma to make the various *vahanas* and a chariot made of wood. Once again Tondaman with the help of Viswakarma created various surprising and grand carriages—*chitra vichitra vahanas*, umbrellas and royal fans. God Brahma conducted the celebrations in a grand manner.

Brahmotsavas - Brahma’s Festivities

As per the command of Srinivasa Brahma also installed the movable four figures—*utsava murties*

called *Utsava Srinivasa Murti*, *Ugra Srinivasa Murti*, *Sarvadhipa Srinivasa Murti* and *Lekhaka Srinivasa Murti* representing the four Vedas. The very god of Venkatachala-Srinivasa himself stands as the pivot of these four of his figures for people to view and offer worship. Addressing Srinivasa of Ananda Nilayam Brahma organized festivities for the movable figures of deities-*utsava murtis* for nine days-*navahnimkam*, in the month of Kanya to end with the star Sravana..

On the eve of Brahmotsavas, Ananta, Garuda Vishvaksena, all *rishi ganas*, the group of gods came out of Ananda Nilayam in the evening carrying the royal insignias of umbrella, ceremonial fans-*chamara*, auspicious music bands into the streets, moving in a clock wise direction, collected the earth for the ritualistic planting of the seedling ceremony in the temple celebrating it in a grand way.

Hoisting invitation to gods for the celebrations-*dhwajarohana*, was followed by palanquin celebration, and then the big *Sesha vahana* on the first day, small *Sesha vahana* on the second day, *Hamsa vahana* at night, *Simha vahana* on the morning of third and *Mutyapu pandiri vahana* at night, on the fourth day *Kalpavriksha vahana* and *Sarvabhupala vahana* at night, on the fifth morning *Mohini avatara* and at night the golden *Garuda vahana*, *Hanumantha vahana* on the sixth morning, *Mangalagiri* in the evening and *Gaja vahana* at

night, on seventh morning *Suryaprabha vahana* and *Chandraprabha vahana* at night, *Radhotsava* on eighth morning, in the night *Asva vahana* followed by *Pallaki utsava* and also *Mangalagiri utsava* and lastly the celebrations concluded by bringing down the hoisted invitation on the *dhawja* and *avabridha snana* in Swami Pushkarini. The *pushpa yaga* was offered to Swami Venkateswara on the following day for the well being of the world in an auspicious grand fashion. As these celebrations were initiated by god Brahma these came to be known as *Brahmotsava* from that day onwards. Sri Venkatesa presented gifts to the eight gods of the directions, to *yaksha*, *kinnera*, *gandahrvas* and all the sages. He showered boons and granted wishes thus being famous as ‘the king of boons-*varala raya*’. All the devotees also received many boons from Srinivasa and went back to their respective places. Emperor Tondaman took permission from Sri Venkateswara to leave and went back to rule the people of his kingdom well.

Enjoying all pleasures, fulfilling the wishes of those who sought his protection, Srinivasa dwelt with Padmavathi in the beautiful Ananda Nilayam which was built in accordance with scriptural injunctions. However, from the time that Sri Maha Lakshmi left him after performing his marriage, Srinivasa felt some kind of lacuna. He began to suffer the pangs of separation from Sri Maha Lakshmi. He also thought, “how can I grant wishes of devotees alone without

Maha Lakshmi by my side?" So finally he decided to call her back. With this thought in mind Srinivasa went to Kolhapuri where Maha Lakshmi resided.

The Place Where the Goddess of Wealth Resides

Srinivasa went to Kolhapuri hoping for Sri Maha Lakshmi to appear before him. He searched and searched for her everywhere but he could not find her. As he was pining to see her and tried in many ways to find her, finally the Voice of the Invisible-*Akasavani* addressed him: "O'Srinivasa! You will never be able to find Sri Maha Lakshmi here! Go to the south from this place. Close to your abode of Venkatachala there is this river Suvanamukhari on the banks of which stands the hermitage of sage Sri Suka. Go to that place. Create a lotus pond near the hermitage. Make offering of lotus flowers to Sri Maha Lakshmi and pray to her. She will certainly appear before you if you do so. Through your efforts the goddess of Wealth will give all the people a chance to serve her."

Srinivasa was amazed at what the voice from the sky said and went to the hermitage of sage Sri Suka on the banks of Suvanamukhari river. He built a lotus pond, installed the Sun god, worshipped him every day and waited for the appearance of Sri Maha Lakshmi by doing a severe penance.

Sage Kapila and others who witnessed the severe penance of Srinivasa told about it to Sri Maha

Lakshmi who was in the nether world. They appealed to her in many ways to relent at least now and join Sri Maha Vishnu. Sage Bhrigu too, joining his hands together, prayed, “O’ Mother! Mother of Wealth! It was not to insult you or your divine place in the bosom of Sri Hari that I stamped with my foot Mother! I had done it with the good intention of making the world know about his magnanimity and your illimitable compassion. But please! I beseech you kindest Mother, grant me pardon and join Srinivasa,” he appealed and prayed to Devi Lakshmi.

Maha Lakshmi who listened to all their prayers felt sorry for her hasty act of yester years. “But it had to happen for the sake of the worlds and for the well being of devotees,” she thought and manifested herself in the lotus pond in the divine place where Srinivasa was praying for her. On Friday the bright fifth day in the month of Kartika in the *brahmi muhurta*, in the *vijaya lagna* of the star Uttarashadha amidst radiant glows to the accompaniment of auspicious conch sounds, drums and *mridangas* sounding all around, appeared Sri Maha Lakshmi in a thousand petalled golden lotus.

Sri Maha Lakshmi, seated in lotus posture in the bloom of eternal youth in the golden lotus, holding a lotus, adorned by lotus garlands, manifested herself as a sixteen year old young lady. Brahma and other gods, Bhrigu, Narada, Tumburu sages, ascetics, *yogis* sang her praise in many ways.

Srinivasa seeing with wide open eyes the radiant thousand rayed exquisite beauty of Sri Maha Lakshmi the Lotus Born, very happy, - appreciating her for she has at last mellowed - concluded his penance. He took out from around his neck the garland of *kalhara* flowers, put it around her neck and embraced her. In that auspicious moment drums sounded from the gods' world. *Yaksha*, *gandharva*, *kinnera* *kimpurusha* and other divine beings showered flowers on the divine couple. Brahma, Indra and other devotees who thronged to the holy place praised Sri Maha Lakshmi coupled with Srinivasa in the lotus pond in this way;

namahasriyah loka dhaatryai brahma
maatre namo namaha
namaste padmanetraayai padma mukhyai
namo namaha
prasanna mukapadmaayai padmakantyai
namo namaha
namobilva vanasthayai vishnupatnyai namo
namaha
vichitra kshauma dhaarinyai prudhusronyai
namo namaha
pakva bilva phalaapiina tungastanyai namo
namaha
surakta padmapatraabha karapaadatale
subhe
suratnangada keyuura kaanchii nuupura
sobhite

yaksha kardama samlipta sarvaange
katakojvale
maangalyaabharanaischitraihi
muktaahaarairvibhuushite
taatankai ravatamsaischa sobhamaana
mukhaambuje
padmahaste namstubhyam prasiida hari
vallabhe
rigyyajussaama ruupayai vidyaayai te namo
namaha
prasiidaasmaan
kripaadrishtipaatairaalokaayabdiye
ye drishtaa ste tvayaa brahma rudrendratvam
samaapnuuyuhu

Sri Maha Lakshmi said, "O'gods! I am very much pleased by your praise –*stuti*. Whoever worships me with *maredu* leaves repeating this *stuti*, will gain their former positions back and will also attain a higher status. All those who chant this will reap the benefits of the prescribed four fold stages namely *dharma, artha, kama and moksha*. Moreover whoever takes a holy dip at an auspicious time in the waters of the lotus pond from which I have arisen, will live a long life, be blessed with wealth, knowledge and also bright progeny," the goddess blessed.

Then Brahma prayed to Srinivasa to remain near the lotus pond with one aspect-*amsa* of his along with Sri Maha Lakshmi to bless devotees. He also expressed his desire to start celebrations at this

auspicious time for which Srinivasa gave his consent for the festivities to begin.

Brahma installed the figures of Srinivasa along with Swatantra Veera Lakshmi (*Viraha*) i.e. a free, independent (lovelorn) Devi Lakshmi in the south east corner of the hermitage of sage Suka beside the sanctum of Sri Bala Rama and Krishna. He also ordained that the worship and festivities be conducted according to the *Pancharatra Agama* so that the ritualistic bathing ceremony concluding the festivities will take place on the fifth day of the bright moon occurring in the month of Kartika every year. He also ordained that at that precise time a garland of flowers which adorns Srinivasa in Venkatchala be brought to the deity in Sri Sukapura along with turmeric and *kumkuma* for the goddess. He conducted the celebrations in a grand manner and went back.

As per the wish of god Brahma Srinivasa remained for worship having one of his aspects here along side of Sri Maha Lakshmi in her form as Veera Lakshmi near the lotus pond, and in his playful-*lila* human form reached Venkatachala with the rest of his primary elements. There appearing with Padmavathi in person, allowing devotees into his presence, talking to them and granting to devotees their wishes blessed them,” said Sage Suta Narrating to the ascetics how Sri Maha Lakshmi specially came to be the anointed queen of Sri Venkateswara in Sri Sukapura on earth, he prayed thus:

gangaa tiirthaadi janaka paada padmam
sutaarakam
sanhka chakraabhayavaram sriinivaasam
bhajenisam
suvarnamukhi tiirastham suvarnedhyam
suvarnadam
suvarnaabham suvarnaangam sriinivasam
bhajenisam

“O‘God! Venkatachalapathi! I shall always meditate on you, you who wear the conch and disc in your two hands, and offer protection in one hand and boons in the other by the gestures *mudras*, you whose lotus feet are the place from where all the holy rivers such as Ganga flow, the one who rows devotees across the sea of life.”

“You who reside on the bank of the river Suvarnamukhari, you who are the one praised by the Vedas which comprise wonderful radiant letters, you who grant riches and all types of wealth to devotees, you who are radiant like gold, you whose beautiful body is adorned by signs of prosperity such as the crown, golden ear ornaments and all such ornaments, is a feast to the eyes of devotees— you gives us immense happiness, You! O‘Dweller of the Ananda Nilayam, I shall ever serve you! be in your service ever,” said Suta and further explained.

“In this way, Srinivasa granting his presence, conversations, and the boon of obeisance at his feet to devotees moved about in the holy region of

Venkatachala. Emperor Tondaman used to pray and worship the small figurine of Sri Venkatesa in his palace. Sometimes when he wished, he used to enter Ananda Nilayam in Venkatachala through a secret passage and feast his eyes on lord Srinivasa. He used to pray with all his heart and go back to his palace.

Tondaman Cries for Protection

One day Srinivasa was very happy and jovial talking with both Sri Devi and Bhu Devi. At that very moment, a severely shaken and trembling Tondaman came unexpected through the secret tunnel, terribly frightened and at once fell at the god's feet. “ “O’ lord! Venkatesa! the one who loves your devotees! *Bhakta vatsala!* Giver of desired wishes, save me, save me, protect me. Srinivasa! your feet are my only recourse! Take me to your bosom and protect me Father! Until you assure to protect me I shall not, I shall never let go of your feet. Only if you vow to save me will I leave your feet. I shall not leave your feet until then.” Crying so, he fell prostrate and tightly held on to the God’s feet greatly pleading.

Venkatesa at once said “King Tondaman! Tell me what ever has happened exactly. Have no fear at all. Why are you so very anxious? Look at your body. It is trembling, and drenched in sweat. Do not be perturbed at all. Tell me the reason for the cause of your fear and anxiety. Get up from my feet. Tell me what the matter is”

“I will not, not rise from your feet at all. Unless you assure that you will protect me and save me only then will I leave your feet. Until then I will in no way leave your feet,” Tondaman prayed fervently to the Dweller Above.

Srinivasa Turns into a Statue

Then Venkateswara said, “O’ Tondaman! The purpose of my incarnation is to save those who fall at my feet for protection. To grant as many boons to whoever seeks them alone that I have come down from Vaikuntha to this earth. It is enough if they call me—Venkatesa! Govinda! Govinda! Whatever may be the sins they commit I shall free the devotees from their sins. It is enough to think of me. I shall cleanse them. That is why I am praised as ‘Venkatapathi.’ You are my great devotee. You are in the inner circle of my devotees. You have gifted to me Ananda Nilayam for my dwelling and to you I say “fear not.” Be without fear. Cast your hesitations and doubts aside and spell about the danger that has befallen you,” He ordered.

“Your name spells of its significance the mere recollection of your name dispels all sins for which you are called O’ Venkatapathi. I have committed a great terrible sin. I simply cannot understand whether I have committed it knowingly or unknowingly. My body shudders at its mere thought. O’ Lord! you are the protector of those who seek shelter. I am gaining courage because you have vowed to protect

me. I shall recall how terrible the sin I have committed is. I have none to protect me you alone are my recourse.”

“Swami Srinivasa! About two years ago a *brahman* named Kurma, came to me along with his wife and children, as he was going to Kasi to immerse the remains of his father in the holy waters of Ganga. He brought his pregnant wife and his five year old son and said, “O’ king, until I return from Kasi please take extreme care of them as your eyelid protects the eye,” he requested. He left them under my care and went to Kasi.

“I housed the *brahman*’s family in a large palace and arranged for all comforts. And in order to keep them away from all harm I had the palace locked and arranged guards. But destiny is strong. Later, completely immersed in affairs of the kingdom, their memory faded completely from my mind.

As two years passed in this way Kurma came back from the pilgrimage of Kasi. He said he had no trace of worry as they were under my care and completed his pilgrimage to Kasi happily, and enquired about the well-being of his wife and children. That *brahman* asked pointedly, “O king! My wife was pregnant when I left for Kasi. Whom did she deliver? Is my five year old son well? If they are safe why are they not coming to meet me, king? I am anxious. Tell me quickly! They are all safe, aren’t they?”

Wondering how as king I have forgotten about them and worried about their safety, keeping these under control, I said to the *brahman*.

“O’ noble *brahman*! Your family members are all safe. Do not get anxious. Your pregnant wife delivered a girl. Your wife and son went with my people to the holy Venkatchala. They will surely return today or tomorrow or the day after, on observing the ritualistic ablutions to Venkatachalam on Friday. Until then rest assured.” And arranged for the *brahman*’s requirements and then hurriedly went to the palace where his family was lodged. On seeing them dead and their skeletal remains — agitated I have come through the secret passage to Ananda Nilayam. Srinivasa! O’ my relation in time of danger! This is what happened. Please save me from this terrible danger O’ Father!” Prayed Tondaman in many ways.

After listening to the whole saga Srinivasa spoke this. “Uncle! King Tondaman! You have committed a great sin. There is no redemption for you. You who have vowed to protect the *brahman*’s family, were negligent of your duty and acquired the sin of death of a *brahman*. The sins of enmity and murder are not easily erased. One must suffer them. In order to save you, my devotee from this danger and protect you I have to make the *brahman*’s family come alive. In lieu of this another one must die or suffer for that sin. For this reason as I have vowed protection

to a worst sinner-to you my dearest devotee, as it befits my name, since I am *kalau venkata nayakaha*, may I relieve you of this sin! Do not worry. Get their bones quickly," ordered Srinivasa. Tondaman had brought them down and handed them over to Srinivasa.

Srinivasa took these to the Pandava *tirtha* nearby. In the *Devakhatam* by its side, he immersed himself up to neck, kept the bones on the bank, sprinkled water on them and at once the *brahman*'s wife and children came to life. The gods showered flowers at this wonderful event.

From then onwards the stream came to be known famous as *Asthi tirtha*. The bones from even hell when immersed here are said to be liberated, so blessed the gods. Srinivasa presented the woman and children brought back to life to Tondaman and said," O king! From now on wards I shall not appear in person to anybody. I shall never ever speak to any one in person again. I shall maintain silence. Even if I have to speak to the most devout among my devotees, I shall do so only through others. The sin you have committed is a ghastly one. Because of my love for your brother and because of the good work which you have done, I am able to do this favour to you." Saying this Srinivasa manifested himself in a wonderful *salagrama* rock as a sculpted figure standing on the lotus pedestal." So said Suta to Saunaka and other sages explaining the divine saga of Srinivasa.

*bhaktaanugraahakaam vishnum susaantam
 garudadhwajam
 prasanna vaktranayanam sriinivaasam
 bhajenisam
 bhakta bhakti supaasena badhdha
 satpaadapankajam
 sanakaadi dhyaana gamyam sriinivaasam
 bhajenisam*

“O’ Venkatapathi the magnificent! Are you not for ever blessing devotees fully and abundantly! In all times, in all places, in all conditions, you not only permeate space but also give comfort to virtuous devotees, you have such a mind. Similarly are you not also the one who vaporizes the comforts of evil doers O’ god!. You are always prepared to fly the Garuda for the rescue of your devotees! O’ Srinivasa! I shall always pray to you who with your looks of utmost benevolence bless and grant your *darsan*. Not merely that O’ Dweller of Ananada Nilaya! You have the lotus feet which are bound by an exquisite comfortable rope called devotion, don’t you? O Venkatachalapathi! You who give your *darsan* to the best and highest *yogis* like Sanaka and Sanandana by their mere thought! I shall forever serve you,” said Suta — eyes half closed meditating on Srinivasa and continued with the next divine saga.

The ocean of compassion, the *bhakta vatsala* Srinivasa because of his compassion for Tondaman brought the *brahman*’s family to life.

Tondaman was happy and surprised to see the *brahman*'s wife and children brought back to life. Srinivasa said, "O king! Give this family back to the *brahman* from now on wards never make such errors again," he preached.

Tondaman went to Kurma and said, "O; noble *brahman*! Here are your wife and children, take them back and bless me!" and presented them. Then Kurma asked his wife and children, "where did you go all this while?" and his wife replied, "I fell into a deep sleep! In that sleep we went into the womb of Srinivasa. We saw many many *tirthas* and holy places, visited and worshipped them. We also saw all the gods!" and related the divine experience, and many knowable divine mysteries and divine acts!" Kurma felt that his wife and children are very blessed, that is why though dead, had many divine experiences, and by the very blessings of Sri Venkateswara came back to life. He was very happy that there is never-no god equal to Srinivasa. He took the presents king Tondaman gave him, and blessing the king in many many ways he went away.

Worshipping with a Thousand Names

King Tondaman heard about the Kurma's wife and children's wonderful sojourn of the divine worlds, view of the divine and thought "what virtues have this *brahman*'s family gathered! That *brahman* lady has got all this because of the kindness of God Sri Venkatesa! Then how is it that

I have not got such divine experiences and the endless kindness of Srinivasa.” The thought made him feel sad. “What should I do to merit the kindness of God Sri Venkateswara?” He pondered and finally he summoned sages like Angirasa and others and asked.

*bhudeva!devatushtyardhekaupaayohyanaamayaha
katham tushtyati govindo vada me
gurusattama*

On being asked thus the guru Angirasa said to Tondaman:

“O king Tondaman! There is no other way except to pray to Swami Srinivasa in order to merit his kindness. The God Sri Venkateswara is very fond of *tulasi* leaves. Reciting the thousand names of god Srinivasa every day offer *tulasi* leaves to him. You will gain immense kindness of Sri Venkatachalapathi. And by his kindness you will also gain liberation finally,” so explained sage Angirasa. (Varaha Purana says that it was actually Sri Venkateswara himself who had asked Tondaman to worship him with golden lotus flowers) As per the command of his Guru Tondaman had golden *tulsi* leaves made and prayed to him everyday reciting the thousand names. In this manner three months passed as Tondaman each day prayed with devotion and *prapatti* offering golden *tulasi* leaves. But Sri Venkateswara did not relent to appear before

Tondaman. He did not even get an iota of joy through his prayers. So Tondaman felt very sad and prayed to the God in this way.

*bhaktaanaamaparaadhayan na gunayanti
gunaadhikaaha
kshmasva mama dauraatmyam bhaktasya
purushottama!
varadaane vaasudeva! bhavaan sreshtatamo
mataha
dayaam kuru dayaasindho!
bhaktoparibhayapaha*

“God! O’ Venkteswara! You who set the faults of your devotees aside and bless them, O lord! Dispel my sins! Who else can be superior to you in granting boons? Pardon my wrong deeds and be kind to me. Show me your kindness. O’ Srinivasa who dispels the fears of devotees be fully and completely compassionate towards me and save me...”

As he made several praises then he heard the voice of Srinivasa speak in this way.

*bhaktascha bahavaha santi naastitvatsadruso
bhuvi
karmakrityaa sughoran brahma strii putra
ghaatukam
prapitsasi kadham paaram duhkhaadraaja
kumara
tavaagrajopakaarena jiivitantu mayaa
kritam*

“Hey King! I have a number of devotees. It can be said there is none who equals them in their devotion. And yet there can never be a worse offender than your self. You caused the *brahman* women to die along with her son and committed a ghastly crime. But to do good because of my devotee your brother, Akasa Raju’s sake, I brought them back to life and did them a great favour. Had it been some one else it would never have happened at all...” as Srinivasa was speaking invisibly Todaman stopped him to say “that is not so O’ God! Who ever it may be in this world, he would never reveal boast of the help done to others. Let it be so. I am the best of your devotees. It can be said that there is no other one as good a devotee as myself. Similarly you are supreme among the kind ones. And now whatever you grant will I take it,” spoke Tondaman in the manner of an egotistic devotee and as usual continued to offer golden *tulasi* leaves at the feet of the Dweller of Ananada Nilayam and worship him every day. Srinivasa decided to cut Tondaman’s egotistic unwise ways. Some days passed in this manner.

Earthen Leaves are Dearer to Me

One day Emperor Tondaman was worshipping Sri Swami in his thousand names offering golden *tulasi* leaves at the God’s divine lotus feet. One after the other the golden *tulasi* leaves fell at his feet. And what a wonder! The golden *tulasi* leaves

that Tondaman offered strangely moved to a side while surprisingly from somewhere else exquisitely delicate beautiful black earthen flowers offered in worship took their place at his feet. Tondaman who has seen this was shocked and surprised that Srinivasa has not yet been pacified after the ghastly sin he committed earlier. Greatly repentant he cried in anguish.

“Swami! God Lord Srinivasa! I have committed a terrible sin. yes! but are you not the protector of the helpless, those devoid of help! Are you not Venkatapathi the destroyer of sins! You are throwing the golden *tulasi* leaves aside and accepting merely the earthen leaves! O’God! Now at least be kind and save me father! There is none to save me but you! *anyadha saranam naasti tvameva saranam mama!* Praying thus he fell prostrate at the God’s feet. And then Srinivasa said, “O king! You have moved closely with me but you have not realized me. What I want is not devotion which is egotistic, but devotion which is simple and humble. See! those earthen *tulasi* leaves are offered by a simple poor devotee. More than what you have given those *tulasi* leaves which he put at my feet are dearer to me. I will let you know who that devotee is, how he serves me and what kind of simple worship he is offering! Listen carefully and inculcate humble devotion and practice it. Only then will you be able to get over this,” said Srinivasa. Narrating this Suta prayed to Srinivasa in this way.

*venkatesa charana tava vande
 sarvatiirthasaranesarane me
 mavidhiirasivavisaphanisenadraarkasomahutabung
 mukhavandyevedye
 sriinivaasa charane tava vande loka
 paavana sukumkumavarne
 srii pradekila surarshi naraanaam srii
 rugaadi nigamaagamavedye*

“O’ Venkatesa! are not your lotus feet the springs of very holy river Ganga, Swami Pushkarini and all holy streams! I bow at your holy lotus feet where the great expert protector of devotees Sri Maha Lakshmi Devi, and the gods Brahma, Vayu, Parameswara, Garutman, Adi Sesha, Indra, Surya, Chandra, Agni and the whole range of gods pray and praise. This is not all. O’ Srinivasa! Your divine crimson tinted auspicious pair of feet which grant all virtuous people wisdom always shine bright. All gods, sages, the highest among your emperor devotees such as Ambarisha, give knowledge about ‘THAT’ to other good people, bow to your auspicious feet which through the Vedas and other *nigamas* and *agamas*, what is *dharma* and what is *adharma* and the essence of godhood, explain well. I bow,” said the meditative sage Suta looking at the right hand of Sri Venkateswara which pointing to his divine holy feet signalling to pray for shelter and continued to narrate the divine saga.

Dear Devotee Kummara Dasu

“Emeperor Tondaman! I have many many dear devotees from all the ages. In this age especially there is a potter named Bhima who is known as a great devotee — extremely simple, devoid of all pretence and my most beloved devotee. He lives in a very tiny hamlet to the south of the Seshachala mountain a *yojana* away. This potter makes the earthen pots for my food offerings. That is his only work. Fetching clay, watering it well and kneading it suitably to make clay balls, placing them on the potter’s wheel and turning them into pots alone is his daily chore. From the time he wakes up till it gets dark, whatever he may do, yet his thoughts are on Srinivasa. All his concentration is focused on making pots needed for offering the food to Srinivasa!

As soon as he wakes up, on finishing his morning routine, he eats the food left from the night before-*chaddi*, then joining both hands, he prays, “Swami, God of Seven Hills! I am going to be immersed in your service. You yourself get all of the work done Lord!” saluting thus he would be absorbed in his work.

He used to be enveloped by a feeling of joy that god is taking the offerings from each of the pots he makes. He was totally unmindful of the passing of time in that experience and state of joy. In this way several years rolled by. Every day he used to pray

like this: “God! I will make enough number of pots and shall keep them aside so that I can also come to pray to you on the hill.” But everyday the pots that he made were only just sufficient for that one day. On the following morning he had to begin making the pots afresh. Hence his desire to visit the god on the hill remained unfulfilled every day. In spite of it, never feeling dejected or dispirited or disappointed he thought, “how can I go to the hill without making pots? Who will make the pots? And if there are no pots, in what will they cook food for the god? In what will god take his food?” several such thoughts crossings his mind, he thought, “I can go to have a view of god later, but pots are the first necessity!” His mind full of such thoughts about the god he used to once again be absorbed in his work of pot making. In this way without a trace of unrest and without any rest, he used to make earthen pots for the god’s temple with renewed devotion and *prapatti*.

Even though he could not have a view of the god in Tirumala, not minding it, he carved a small figure of the god Sri Venkateswara, installed it on a small pedestal by the side of his potter’s wheel, and worshipped the god every day.

To that potter the small wooden figurine was Tirumala Srinivasa himself. He not only believed in his mind that Tirumala Srinivasa himself has come in the form of this wooden figure, but he also said

so, and began to worship him, pray to him. Before starting his work each day he used to offer salutations to Srinivasa. And at the end of the day on concluding his work, he used to make four or five flowers out of the earth stuck to his fingers. Taking these earthen flowers into his hand and placing them at the feet of the wooden figure of his god he used to pray, "O' God! I have only these. I do not have anything more. So, please treat these earthen flowers offered at your feet as being better than gems and accept them with affection, and make me happy O' God!" with tears of joy! His work was carried on in this way everyday. Srinivasa not only took the food from the earthen pots made by potter Bhima everyday but also accepted these mud flowers with utmost love. It was those mud flowers which the god made visible to Tondaman in Ananda Nilayam.

Tondaman who heard about the low caste potter Bhima from Srinivasa himself thought that he must visit this devotee and set on foot. Tondaman left all his kingly retinues and went alone walking without anybody by his side, reached Bhima's house tired and saying "I salute the most devout Bhima" fell unconscious. "Alas! The king has fainted! Why did he come to this lowly man's house at all?" A worried Bhima wondered. And then as Tondaman gained consciousness Swami Sri Venkateswara appeared. The potter, overjoyed on seeing the very God himself before him, in his own native manner praised the god in many ways.

“O ‘God! Have you come to this potter’s house?” he says. “Alas God! for my sake what trouble have you taken to climb down the seven hills!” he says. “Do I know any mystical chanting in praise of you who have came to my house? No, I do not!, oh what shall I do, oh what shall I do? Leave mystical praise things alone! I do not even know how to speak well o’ god!” He stutters. “I do not have such devotion as Sabari, Vidura, Gajendra, Vibhishana and other such devotees. I do not even know how to worship you. And into the house of this poor potter have you entered, you have come O’God! You are the ruler of all the worlds! ‘One Sivaratri’ at least in a life time it is said and the God himself has come to my house in this way! And what do I have in this poor house of mine to give you to eat, nothing! How lowly is my life!” In this way as potter Bhima pondered in several ways, amazed and was overwhelmed with devotion, Venkateswara consoled the potter in this way.

“O’ you Tamale! Devotion coupled with affection is dearer to me than the difficult ascetic way. Your ardour and your loving pining eagerness to visit me is very endearing to me.! You do not need exotic foods made of ‘six tasty types’ to feed me. Give me whatever food that is there in your house, the food that you yourselves eat. That is sumptuous enough for me. Come on, give me food, I am hungry too!” Venkateswara hurried his potter-devotee. At once the potter’s wife Tamalini brought

a cooked ball of millet *sankati mudda* in an earthen plate, placed it in front of the god and said, "God! we are potters, we do not know any customs! You are the God who protects us all. This food that I have cooked, kindly take it to be a feast, eat it O' God!" though she was frightened yet she pleaded with devotion. Out of his love for the potter couple the God ate out of the mud vessel the food—cooked ball of millet which they offered lovingly. Their joy out of bounds, the couple fell headlong at the lotus feet of the god offering salutations! That is all! At the touch of the God's divine feet the potter couple left their earthly bodies of five elements and assumed divine forms. Amazed at Srinivasa's *leelas* the gods, showered flowers on them. They sounded *dundubhis*. And then a radiant *vimana* arrived from Vaikuntha and landed there. On the order of Sri Venkateswara the radiant potter couple in their divine bodies entered that *vimana* and went away to Vaikuntha. The God too disappeared.

Tondaman, who saw all this without batting an eyelid was surprised on witnessing this amazing event that took place before his very eyes thought, "what a fortunate person this Bhima is! I am also fortunate in having witnessed the most devout potter couple ascend to Vaikuntha!" He eschewed his pride tainted devotion. As Suta explained about the transformation in Tondaman, Saunaka and other sages exclaimed, "Wonderful! Most wonderful!" and asked Suta to narrate about the events that followed too. Suta continued his narration.

The great devotees, the one who were ever engaged in serving the god, the ones who not only had a *darsan* of Him but also were blessed with a divine life in Vaikuntha, their final life event which Tondaman actually witnessed turned the emperor in to a *sattvik* completely.

On reaching Tirumala, meditating on the God with a steady mind, he appealed to him in this manner.

“O’God! Lord of the Seven Hills! Protector of destitutes! Saviour of those who pray to you! You are the great teacher who have shown the way to a completely ignorant one like me. I am not a great devotee like Bhima. But still am I not one among your dear ones! Be pleased with the little service of mine and grant me deliverance O’ Lord! Enough of this life. I cannot bear this elemental body any more.O’ Ocean of Compassion! Be fully kind to me and take me into your abode!” He fell headlong at Srinivasa’s feet, shedding pitiful tears and weeping bitterly prayed to him in many ways.

Srinivasa lifted up Tondaman and said “O’ King! You are also a great devotee of mine. But you have prided yourself overtly that only you are my prized devotee. That pride is now gone. You are like a ‘cleansed pearl’ now. With a pure mind continue to be devoted in this fashion. Do penance. In the next birth you will certainly gain liberation. This blessing is certain.”

“O ‘God! Venkatesa! Is it only in my next birth that salvation will be granted? It is alright then,”, he

said and went to the Swami Pushkarini at once with his intention firm in mind, took a bath in it and the aged Tondaman of his own accord left his body. In his next birth, being in the vicinity of Srinivasa, doing penance with a clear unperturbed mind he attained salvation. In the sanctum of Govinda every day Tondaman is remembered. As long as Govinda reigns on this earth will so long Tondaman be remembered. All of us who have heard this divine saga let us raise our voice to utter the divine name “Govinda!”

Govinda! Govinda!! Govinda!!!

Sage Suta eyes half closed, with his whole heart and mind, meditated on the god and made every one call out aloud the holy name “Govinda!”

Then all the sages said this to sage Suta. “O’ great hearted idealist-*mahasaya*, Suta! You have explained the story, the *lilas* and the powers of the dweller of Tirumala excellently giving us great joy. We are elated. We have been experiencing a divine inexpressible spiritual state. Very well. What is the way to worship and pray to god Srinivasa so that the god will grant us all our wishes? Is there a particular way of worshipping the god? If there is a way explain it to us.” They asked.

The Way of Worshipping the Dweller of Ananda Nilaya

Sage Suta was filled with great joy on being thus asked. “Yes, there is this way of worshipping the

dweller of Ananda Nilayam. It is a very unrevealed one. Earlier the ten thousand headed Adi Sesha passed it on to Kapila. God Sri Venkateswara should be worshipped repeating the one hundred and eight holiest of holy names placing golden lotus flowers at his sacred feet which will give credit.

Once upon a time god Brahma worshipped Sri Venkateswara repeating the one hundred and eight holiest of holy names and had his desires fulfilled. Hence you too worship the dweller of Ananda Nilayam with the one hundred and eight holiest of holy names.

*teshaamsesha nagaadhiisa maanasollasa
 kaarinaam
 namnaamashtasatam vakshye Venktaadri
 nivaasinaha
 aayuraarogyadam pumsaam dhanadhaanya
 sukhapradam
 gjnaanapradam viseshena mahadaiswarya
 kaarakam
 archayet naamabhirdivyaihi venkatesa
 padaankitaihi
 namnaamashta satsyaasya rishir brahmaa
 prakiirtitaha
 chandonush tup tathaa devo venkatesa
 udaahritaha
 niilagokshiira sambhuuto biijamityuchyate
 budhaihi*

*srinivasasthathaa saktihi hridayam
venktaadhipaha
viniyogastathabhiishta sidhyarthe cha
nigadyate*

Humans will be blessed with long life and health if they worship him with these names which are very dear to him. A surplus of riches and granary will be granted. Along with knowledge they are sure to garner great wealth! Each name should be coupled with the divine word “Venkatesa” and repeated in the ritual of worship.

God Brahma is the *rishi* of the *ashttottara satanamamantra*. *Anushtthup* is the prosodic meter. *Paramatma* is Venkteswara. The name Srinivasa showered with milk of a black cow is the seed *bijam*. *Sakti* is Srinivasa himself! *Hridayam* too is Srinivasa.! Its purpose or *viniyoga* is the fulfillment of desires. Now, without further delay, without any slackness-*alakshyam*, without a trace of doubt and with care and concentration-*deeksha* bring your mind to it.

1. *om venktesaaya srii venkatesaaya namaha*
2. *om seshaadri nilayaaya namaha srii venkatesaaya namaha*
3. *om vrisha druggocharaya namaha srii venkatesaaya namaha*
4. *om vishnave srii venkatesaayanamaha*
5. *om meru putragiriisaaya srii venkatesaya namaha*

6. *om saraha swami tatijushe srii
venkatesaaya namaha*
7. *om kumaaraakalpa sevyaaaya srii
venkatesaaya namaha*
8. *om vajri drigvishayaaya namaha srii
venkatessaya namaha*
9. *om suvarchalaa sutanyasta
sainapatyabharaaya srii
venkatesaaya namaha*
10. *om raamaaya sri venkatesaya namaha*
.....
101. *om vaikunthaachala vasine srii
venkatesaya namaha*
102. *om mukundaaya srii venkatesaaya
namaha*
103. *om anantaaya sri venkatesaaya namaha*
104. *om virinchaabhyardhitaaniita soumya
ruupaaya srii venkatesaya namaha*
105. *om suvarnamukharisnaata
manujaabhiishtadaayine srii
venkatesaayanamaha*
106. *om halaayudha jagattirdha samasta
phaldaayine srii venkatesayanamaha*
107. *om govindaaya sri venkatesaaya namaha*
108. *om srinivaasaaya sri venkatesaaya
namaha*

These one hundred and eight names are of utmost power. These names are called *Sri Venkateswara Ashtottara satanamavali*.

*tasya srii venkatesastu prasanno bhavati
dhruvam
archanaayaam viseshena
graahyamashhttottarasatam
venkatesaabhidheyairyo venkataadri
nivaasinam
archayennamabhi stasya phalam mukti na
samsayaha
gopaniiya midam stotram sarveshaam na
prakaasayeth sradhdhaa bhakti yujaameva
daapayeth naamasangraham
iti seshena kadhitam kapilaaya mahaatmane
kapilaakhya mahaayogi sakaasaattu mayaa
srutam
taduktam bhavataamadya sadyaha priütikaram
hareh*

Whoever worships the God with devotion everyday with the amazing power of these wonderful one hundred and eight names, or recites or hears, to such persons the god Srinivasa, certainly pleased will grant them their desired wishes. There can be no doubt what so ever of the salvation thereafter. This *stotra* has to be maintained to be guarded with utmost care. These one hundred and eight names should be given only to those who are devout, who are sincere to those who believe in him and have faith in Him. Adi Sesha had given these mystical

names of Srinivasa to sage Kapila, I heard them from sage Kapila himself. My intention in passing these garland of names dear to Sri Srinivasa on to you is that all of you should have a good life here on earth and here after too! “said Suta. He further added

*vedeshu cha puraaneshu venkatesa
kathaamritam
varnitam chetihaareshu
bhaarataadyaagameshucha
manoharam tu samsraavya mihaamutreshta
daayakam
gjnaana pradam viseshena
mahdaiswaryakaaranam
vairaagya bhatki sattvaadi pradendriya
vasapradam
venkataadre suchi kshetre suchi dosho na
vidyate*

“O Lord! O ‘Venkatesa the great! Your amazing divine saga is like *amrita*. It dispels both birth and death of man and grants salvation. Such a sacred holy divine saga of yours is described wonderfully in the four Vedas, in the eighteen *puranas*, and in the many scriptures-*agamas*.

“O’God! Everything about you is so very endearing. It is very very pleasing to the ear too! Even to hear these names is enough for a person. All that is good will happen in this life and here and in life hereafter too. It means that in addition to all the scriptural knowledge of the Vedas and Vedanta

needed for salvation, these mystical names will also grant all the wealth in abundance to lead a life of comfort in this world. And this is not all! O ‘King of the Hills! Hearing your sweet story gives immense satisfaction to us. The joy it gives moves our hearts sway in pleasant joy. In addition it also creates the strength needed to keep our senses under control. It multiplies the qualities of calm, peace and joy. It will also increase devotion and *prapatti*. It does not stop there but leads to detachment-*vairagya* in the end, thereby creating interest in salvation and finally grants liberation too. Sri Venkatachala region— this great centre of the sacred divine saga which has no taint of impurity-*asuchi* nor shall there be any such, understand!” Listening to Suta’s exhortations and praise about the exalted Sri Venkatesa, the sages asked him further.

Duties Ordained at the Holy Venkatachala

“O’ great one! Sage Suta! You have until now narrated the powerful story of the sacred Sri Venkatachala, the divine saga of God Sri Srinivasa, his amazing powers and divine acts about which we never heard in a manner pleasing to our ears. We have heard the *lilas* of the Ananada Nilaya’s saga with great joy. We have also come to know about the way in which to worship the God. It is very good. The way you have narrated it to us is excellent. It has brought the divine saga alive to our mind’s eye. As you narrated it we had the joyful feeling that we have been witnessing it. Hence all of us also are

desirous of going on a pilgrimage to Venkatachala. We want to have a look at Srinivasa's divine auspicious form to the feast of our eyes. We want to worship him with our own hands to our hearts' content. We wish to pray to him to the satisfaction of our vocal ability. For this purpose tell us about the duties that are to be performed in that holy place when we go there. Should we make any such acts of offerings—*danas*, in that holy place? What will be the effect of such beneficial acts? What fruits will such beneficial acts bring? Kindly tell us about these aspects also for us to observe and make our pilgrimage to the Venkatachala completely fruitful! We make our devoted obeisance at your feet. Be very kind to us and explain to us that procedure!"

"O' sons! I am pleased! This inexpressible divine joy which you experience comes only on listening to the divine saga of the Dweller of Ananda Nilaya. In order for you to enhance it and make it eternal for you, you must all go to the hill on foot. You must see the full beauty of nature in those seven hills with your own eyes! You must, with the triple purity of all your heart, speech and actions, pray to the Lord of the Seven Hills. The intention to go to Venkatachala on a pilgrimage has occurred to you as the effect of your great fortune! This is a reflection of the Hill God's height of kindness! Hence, I shall explain to you as desired by you those duties ordained to be performed and those actions which are forbidden. Listen carefully with attention now.

“O’ pious sages-*sattamulara*! Hurry up on your pilgrimage to the holy Venkatachala region. Soon as you go, circumambulate the hill, prostrate before it with faith and offer your salutations with devotion. Take a holy dip in the Kapila *tirtha* below and also in all other streams in and around the seven hills. Pray to the presiding deities in those places, worship them and pray to them. Then in utmost humility and obedience walk up the lush green flower bush adorned seven hills of free flowing streams, which echoes with songs of birds and roar of wild animals, and the devotional chanting of *Govinda* *Govinda* of devotees.

*aaruhyaa ratna saanum tam suka kokila
manjulam
swaami pushkariniim padma vana vaatena
ranjitaam
praapya snaatvaa cha tattirthe pradakshina
vidhaanataha
parisrutya vimaanaam cha darsanaat
papanaasanam
hridayananda jananam pulakodgama
kaarakam
pravisya bhuu varaaham cha natvaa srii
venkataadhipam
srii bhuumibhyaam mudaayuktam sankha
chakra varaayudhe
dadhaanam pundariikaaksham
smayamaana mukhaambujam ...
dayaamrita tarangaabdhi mandasmita
manoharam*

*samyakdrishtvaa cha natvaa cha stutvaa
 naamabhirevacha
 archayitvaa cha kamalaihi
 labhdhvaabhiishtam cha durlabham
 krita krityaa vivartadhvam ityuktaa
 munayastathaa*

On the mountain Sesha, have a full view of the beautiful waters rippling with the breeze brushing past the lotus blooms in Swami Pushkarini. Go around the Swami Pushkarini in the prescribed way and salute to it. Take a bath in the holy waters of Sri Swami Pushkarini with a clearly worded wish in mind. Standing on its banks view the glowing ‘thousand rayed radiance’ of the golden tower of the Ananda Nilayam. At once on looking at the golden tower the heart begins to swing in joy. It makes the body bristle in delight. But this is not all. It shatters all the sins at a single glance and purifies those who view its towers. Go around such a divine Ananda Nilayam, view the god Swetha Varaha, pray to him. The deity is also called as Bhu as he protected and saved the goddess Earth from the clutches of demon Hiranyaksha. Swami Varaha is a symbol of knowledge. You must first visit this god and only then should you visit the god Sri Venkateswara. This is the custom of this sacred region. God Sri Varaha is the giver of knowledge. Joy will be ‘the fruit on the palm’ of the devotee who has knowledge! Only then should one go and have *darsan* of the Dweller of Ananda Nilayam.

View the lotus eyed, smile adorned, lotus faced great lord Venkatesa holding the conch and disc, happily seated in benediction with his two consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi by his side. That god Srinivasa is like a great ocean, his compassion are its waves. View Him well-He, who with his ever undiminished smiling countenance, is always there for his devotees. Join your hands in salutation. Say out your prayers, praise him—*stuti*. Offer lotus blooms repeating the hundred and eight names of Tirumalesa and worship Him. Have all your wishes completely fulfilled. Make your pilgrimage and your lives there be blessed.”

“And then, also visit the other sacred places. Bathe in the holy waters of those streams. Make offerings.” As sage Suta spoke thus, Saunaka and others addressed him again.

“O’ great sage! What are the donations to be made in the holy place of Venkatachala? What are those offerings that please him? Kindly let it be known to us in detail as to the gifts which will make Him pleasantly inclined towards us. We shall follow them accordingly and come back successfully. Great One! Please let us know!” Suta replied thus.

*sri venkatesa yatraardham gachchdhvam
sudhruda vrataaha
vishnu sandarsanam kritvaa bhaktimanto
jitendriyaaha*

“O’, you, who have earned the great wealth of *tapas*! Firm in your vows of this endeavour set on

your pilgrimage to Venkatachala. Begin this journey having your mind firmly rooted in the god Srinivasa alone. Have your senses under control by listening to narration of holy stories, by chanting of god's name, by meditation and such practices, cultivate and develop highest devotion. You go up the Venkata mountain, to the region endowed with immeasurable and indescribable power, feast your eyes on the God seated royally, the 'Emperor of Everyday Weddings,' generous, ever there, giving a series of auspicious grants! Meditate on him with all your heart! And call out to him "Govinda! Govinda!! Govinda!!!" whole heartedly", said Suta. He encouraged Saunaka and all other sages to undertake a devotional journey to Venkatachala; he further added.

"O' holy souls of spiritual wealth! Listen then with concentration and care! I am going to tell you about the offerings that are ordained to be made on the sacred Venkatachala".

The Ordained Offerings and Their Effect

"The one incomparable offering that can be made on this Venkatachala of unmatched holiness is the offering of food. The other one coupled with *anna dana* are the ceremonial offerings which satisfy ancestors. These two give optimum beneficial effect. Giving away of gold gives eternal joy and salvation. Offering clothes increases longevity of life. Donating cows, especially black cows to please God Venkatesa, will ensure respect for a corresponding

number of years as per the number of hair on the cow in the eternal Vishnu *loka*".

Offering of camphor, sandal, conch, ornaments will dissipate ghastly sins. Donating land will cut worldly ties asunder and shows a virtuous path. If help is extended in building a chariot for the God, it has the good effect of giving away 'a crore of girls' in marriage and ten thousand cows. Offering the effects of royal service such as umbrella, fans, *chamari* fans, garlands of golden blooms, elephants, horses to the Lord of Tiru Venkata will bring kingship and in addition grant the highest realm for a peaceful state of joy."

To the one who performs festivities on the eighth, fourteenth, full moon Sankranthi, and new moon days of the year, God Srinivasa will not only condone all the thousands of misdeeds committed but also grant pleasure-*bhoga* without attachment, and ultimately-salvation! Lighting cow ghee lamps, remembering ancestors in the proximity of the God will dispel all the ghastly crimes of the ancestors".

"On taking a bath in the holy streams and ponds on the seven hills donating gold, cows, silver, land, gingely seeds along with money and betel leaves-*tambula* and fruits, aromatic substances, curds, buttermilk, jaggery drink, sumptuous meal will dissipate all sins and give riches."

"In the sacred Tirumala one who does not provide water for those who are thirsty will be born

as cattle and birds. So it is very essential to offer drinking water. Providing water for drinking will bring umpteen number of good results. It is not possible to name all of these. The positive effects of providing water are infinite,” said Suta and continued. “My master Veda Vyasa, in addition to the ones already mentioned also explained some more special donations to be made here in this holy region to Anjana Devi.”

*annadaanam vastradaanam dvayameta
prasamsyate
pituhu sraadhdham viseshena venkataadrau
nagottame
saalagraama silaa daanam yah karoti
nagottame
angabhangamavaapnoti svaanubhuutincha
vindati
kanyaam dadaati yo devi sotriyaaya dvijataye
vishnulokam samaasaadya modate
pitrubhissaha*

In this sacred region of Venkata mountain offerings of food, clothes, and ceremonies to ancestors are of utmost importance. Donating holy *salagramas* will lead to the unattached enjoyments and finally to salvation. Giving away of bride in marriage will give joys in Vishnu loka,” explained Suta to Saunaka and others and added further.

“O’ great souls! Perform these acts of giving of which I have heard and have passed on to you. Let lose those sins, misdeeds committed knowingly or

otherwise and negative qualities of yours. Get started. Go to the mountain Venkata and start your ascent. During your ascent pray in several ways. “

*venkataadrim giri tantu praardhayet
punyavardhanam
swarnaachala mahaapunya sarvadeva
nishevita
brahmaadayopi yam devaaha sevante
sradhdhayaa saha
tam bhavantamaham padbhyaam
aakrameyam nagottama
kshmasva tadaghama medya dayaya
paapachetanaha
tvanmuurdhani kritaavaasam maadhavam
darsayasvame
praardhayitvaa narastvevam venkataadrim
nagottamam
tato mridu padam gachhet paavanam
venkataachalam
venkataadrau mahaapunye sarvapaataka
naasane
swami pushakrinii tiirthe snaatva
niyamapurvakam
pinda daanam tatah kuryaat api sarshapa
maatrakam
samii dala samaanaan nvaa dadyaat
pindaan pitrinprati
swargasthaa mokshamaayanti swargam
naraka vaasinaha*

“O’ king among the mountains! O ‘Sesha hill of utmost sanctity served by all the gods! Gods Brahma and others worship you with several observances and with great reverence. I am setting my foot on such a sacred hill as you. Be fully kind to me and forgive my sins and defects, grant to me the divine view of Lord Srinivasa who resides atop you in a thousand rayed radiance.” Praying thus making obeisance and offering salutations, set your foot gently on the hill to go up. Then having the very view of Swami Pushkarini which scatters sins, salute to the holy water and take a holy dip in its waters with your specific desire in mind. Then offer oblations to ancestors with those waters. Making *pinda* of the size of a mustard seed or a *jammi* leaf offer them ceremoniously to the ancestors with oblation. With such ceremonious offerings as these, ancestors in heaven will gain salvation and those in hell will not go to heaven but will grant the oblation giver all prosperity. But what is to be understood is that gifts should always go to the deserving. Any gift when received by the deserving will be completely fruitful. Gifting any one of these equates giving a thousand of them. Similarly, any small misdeed or wrong done will greatly enhance the amount of sin. The conduct and mindset in Tirumala should always be full of good thoughts always. That sacred place is not a place for pleasure and not at all a place of entertainment. This is a place of fruition. The seven hills are a region for observance and

spiritual practice. The greater the amount of practice the greater will be its effect. How should this *sadhana* be done? There are several ways of spiritual practice. One can do penance. Meditation is another. Chanting of mantra is one more. Singing praise is another one. Puranas can be narrated. Study of sacred books is one more way of spiritual practice.”

“Hence, in your pilgrimage on that hill do not waste even a single moment in useless conversations but make best use of your time. It is due to the immense compassion of the deity Sri Venkateswara that the intention to set on this pilgrimage has come to your minds. It is his kindness that actualizes the journey to that sacred place. Hence, do not at all be careless in your journey, never be negligent.”

Not merely these there are other injunctions too. I shall now tell you more about the main purpose of your pilgrimage to the abode of God Sri Venkateswara. Listen carefully with attention.

*srii venkateswaram devam yah pasyati
sakrunnaraha
sa naro mukti maapnoti vishnu saayujya
maapnuyaat*

It is enough to think even once about the god Sri Venkateswara with all your mind, sing his praise and actually have his *darsan*. Salvation is assured. There is no necessity for any other spiritual practice. There is no doubt in saying that the virtues garnered

for ten years in Krita *yuga*, one year in Treta *yuga*, five months in Dwapara *yuga* accrues one crore more of times of good at once in one day for glancing at the god even for a moment in Kali *yuga*.

*Kim danaih kim vrataistheshaam kim
tapobhiih kimadhwaraiah
venkatesam param devam yona chintayati
kshanam
agjnaanii sa cha paapii syaat sa muuko
badhira stathaa
sa jadonandhascha vigjneyaha chidram tasya
sadaa bhavet*

Those who have never given away any donations, who have never performed any rituals, never made penance, nor even sacrifices, let them for only one moment bring Him into their minds which is sufficient to be blessed by him. He who does not do so would be treated as an ignorant fellow, sinner, dumb, deaf, blind and dumb witted fellow.

The *dukhas* which are the outcome of certain friendships, of enmity, greed, fear will be certainly dispelled by thinking of Sri Venkateswara. From a tiny tiny creature to the gods starting with Brahma, Indra and others all have equal status in Srinivasa's presence. It means that Srinivasa cares equally for all those who come into his presence. There is no distinction between the low and the high there. Anyone can think of Him, anyone can have his *darsan*."

*sriinivasaachcha na samam naadhikam
punyamastivai
venkataadri nivaasam tam dveshti yo
mohamaasthitaha*

There is no act of goodness — none more powerful than serving the god Srinivasa. Similarly there can be no bigger sin than hatred towards the God of gods. It is very difficult even to imagine into what depths of lowness such fellow falls into. In this way the greatness of Srinivasa can be spoken of endlessly. However what is said still happens to be very little! Hence, o' great sages! with all devotion and sincerity-*prapatti* without any further delay set on your pilgrimage to Venkatachala.”

*bhavabdhitaaram kativarti hastam
swarnambaram ratnakiriita kundalam
aalambi suutrottama maalya bhuushitam
namaamyaham venkatasaila naayakam*

“O' Leader of the Mountain Venkata! You simply turn the ocean of this life into a pool of knee deep waters to those who seek the protection of your feet. O' God! I bow before your most beautiful, mesmerizing radiant and resplendent form, adorned by several golden ornaments, diamond studded crown, ear ornaments, *yagnopavita*, garlands of flowers, at your divine feet with my mind, speech and body,!” sage Suta uttered in a joyful state of excitement repeating the holy name “Govinda! Govinda!! Govinda!!! Praying to Sri

Venkatachalapathi, he bade farewell to Saunaka and other sages.

*sravanaatsarva paapaghnam mananaat
punya vardhanam
svadhyaaanaat sidhdhidam vishnum
prekshanaanmokshadam bhaje*

“Swami O’ Lord! O’ Venkatesa! To listen to your divine sagas itself is magnificent. All sins will be dissipated. It is enough to remember your divine life! Virtues will multiply plentifully. O’ Lord of Tirumala! It is sufficient to meditate on you. *Anima* and the eight *siddhis* will come under control. Then O’ God Venkatesa! A glance of you from head to foot itself assures salvation. Hence, O’ Kind One to devotees Srinivasa! I shall sing of you!” said sage Suta, praying to the God, asked Saunaka and other sages, to remember this saga which they have heard, advised them to meditate on it, make their lives meaningful, and bid farewell to them.

The “Lord of the Great Egg” - *brahmanda* which contains infinities of universes! the one who is offered salutation at each step the devotee takes, the one God who answers at once, especially known as the Venkata Nayaka in the age of Kali, the One who sides with his devotees, who is the lord of Venkatachala, having heard of many many things and specialities of Srinivasa in many different ways to their heart’s contents, sages embarked on their pilgrimage to the mountain Venkata..

The sages Bharadwaja, Kausika, Jabali, Kasyapa, Kratu, Daksha, Pulastya, Gautama, Pulaha, Angirasa, Devala, Devadarsana, Kautsa, Kanva, Nrukanda, sage Satananda, sage Maitreya... many and many more sages, great *yogis*, high ascetics, eager to have a view the great Venkatesa joined the group on their pilgrimage.

At every step they raised their voices taking the name of Govinda, crying aloud," Govinda! Govinda!! The One of Seven Hills! Venkata Ramana Govinda!!!" and went on their journey. First of all they bathed in the waters of the holy river Ganga. Then crossing the river, travelling south, taking holy dips in several sacred streams, visiting holy places, they reached the equally sacred river Godavari. Having performed the prescribed duties, they reached river Krishnaveni in which they bathed and proceeded further.

*tatra tatra mahaa nadyaam snaatvaa
snaatvaa tapodhanaaha
venktadrim samaagatya tapta
jaambuunadaatmakam
sarvatiirthamayam punyam sarva sidhdha
nishevitam
madamanjula maayuura kekaasvana
manoharam
divya nirghara sampaurnam
phalapushpadrumairyutam
anatikramya suutokta sevakramamime
budhaaha*

*chakruh srii venkatesasya sevaam parama
 paavaniim
 snaanam mantraischa kurvanto nirghareshu
 sarassucha
 pasyanta staani ramyaani saanuuni
 manimanti cha
 srunvantaha srotra ramyaani pakshinaam
 vachanyaanyapi
 gaayantaha saama gaanaani pathantaha
 stuti sanchayam
 nrityantaha sambhramaatsarvekshvelantascha
 tapodhanaaha
 utpatantaha patantascha harshaavesa vasam
 gataaha
 giri pradakshinam samyak kurvantatste
 sanaih sanaih
 snaatvaa kapilatiirthe cha drishtva natva
 sivam giram
 aaruhyaa meru sringaabham siddha
 gandharva sevitam*

In this way taking a holy dip in the waters of great rivers and streams and ponds, they finally reached the holy Venkata hill region. They bowed their heads in salutation to the great king of mountains.

That region, as it was full of holy streams was resplendent by its virtuosity. The Venkatachala *kshetra* was prayed to every day continuously by the perfected ones-*siddhas*, practitioners and

aspirants. The cries and dance of many many groups of the peacocks there were enticing and beautiful.

They reached the holy mountain where the streams were full and flowing freely, the trees were hanging down with the weight of their fruit and flower. As instructed by sage Suta about their first duty, turning around themselves-*atmapradaksina* they offered salutations to Venkatadri from afar. All the sages in a spirited way recited the Samaveda and singing praise of the lord Srinivasa from other vedic chantings began their circumambulation of the Venkatachala hill. In that process in their joyful enthusiastic fervor happily they uttered loud cries, in their devotional fervor they rolled on the ground, they rose again, they rolled and jumped and they became forgetful of themselves in their joy.

And then they went to the holy place Kapileswara *tirtha*. They took a holy bath and made ritualistic offerings to their forefathers. Then they prayed to Sri Kamakshisameta Sri Kapileswara Swami and other associated deities around, ascended the seven hills worshipped by the perfected ones and *gandharvas*.

They were overwhelmed on seeing the holy region Venkatachala and its ranges which were more radiant than the golden mount Meru. They were amazed as they had not seen such a mountain anywhere earlier; on seeing the tower of Ananda Nilayam they offered salutations again in *atma*

pradakshina. They took bath in the holy waters of Swami Pushkarini with their intended wish-*sankalpa*, prayed to Sri Varaha Swami and then feasted their eyes on the Lord of Ananda Nilayam.

koti kandarpa laavanyam kiriita
makutojvalam
urahsthita sriyaakraanta muktaa daamopa
sobhitam
chaturbhuja mudaaraangam sankha chakra
dharam param
niilamegha nibham syamam piita vaasa
samachyutam
sri bhumi sahitam vishnum padmaarchita
padaambujam
pranemuhu sahasaa hrishtva harshotphulla
vilochanaaha
tushtuvurveda mantraischa stotraischa sruti
sammataihi

To the One who glows with the beauty of a crore of Manmadhas, the One who dons a full gem-studded radiant crown, the One whose bosom Goddess Lakshmi adorns, garlands of pearls beautify, the One whose four hands bear the conch and disc, the pelvic and *varada mudras*, the One of the colour of the dark cloud, the One who wears yellow raiments, the Indestructible One, the Endless One, the One on whose either side stand Devi Sri and Devi Bhu, and the One at whose lotus feet lotus flowers are laid, such Dweller of Ananda Nilayam,

they all prayed and worshipped to their hearts' content, they offered prayers of Vedic hymns and chanting. They gazed and gazed at him without batting an eyelid in amazement. They fell prostrate at his feet in full salutations. "The grains of earth may be counted patiently but the God of Wealth-Srinivasa and the clusters of his numerous facets-*guna gana*- cannot be enumerated at all, can we?" so they thought and praised him in several ways. Chanting the hundred and eight names of Sri Venkateswara melodiously with great devotion they offered lotus flowers at his lotus feet. After worshipping with the flowers they took the *tulasi* leaves at his feet into their hands, addressing Sri Devi Lakshmi on His bosom, chanting her twenty four names, "*Om Sriyaih namaha, Om Lokadhatri namaha, Om Brahmamatre namaha...*" they offered worship. At once Srinivasa appeared and addressed these high ascetics who had come to him and worshipped him.

"O' exalted ones! I have given my full blessings to you in the Naimisha forest itself. By the grace of sage Suta you have all listened with great attention to the powerful saga of the Venkatachala. However far away may they be from this holy region will all their wishes be fulfilled by listening about the *kshetra*, or narrating about it, or reading about it with faith whole heartedly. Reading or narrating or hearing about the saga of power of the Venkatachala

especially in the month of Kanya in which I have come to this earth, will please me greatly and make me grant boons. This is the right way for gaining me easily in this *Kali yuga*. That is the reason for which I bear the title *Kalau Venkata Nayakah*-the redeemer in this age of Kali is Venkata, and I stand here on this mountain only for the sake of earthlings of this age. Those who pray to me for riches, grains, lands, progeny ...I grant all ... Hence, I am called as the ‘King of Boons!’ I shall also bless them with Vaikuntha at the end of life with ease.”

All the sages were very happy on seeing the God himself who appeared before them and granted boons to them. They all remained in the Venkatadri region visiting the holy places. They continued with their ascetic practices and penances. While coming back, each in several ways recounted the wonderful experiences they have had, reached the forest Naimisa and approaching sage Suta-the giver of this wonderful wealth of experience to them-addressed him thus.

“O’great one! Sage Suta! By your grace we have gained the divine view of the Lord of Sri Venkata and also got plentiful boons from the emperor of the hills.”

“How surprising! How wonderful! Oh, what skill of yours is it O’sage! Srinivasa appears on the mountain in that region in the very manner that you

have described to us. The grandeur of that holy place is infinite, it is immesurable! The way you have described it is beautiful and it actually is very beautiful. O' great sage! Have you at any time visited this *kshetra* of Venkatachala and the Lord of the Seven Hills! Please tell us,” they asked him.

Then sage Suta answered, “O' virtuous ones! You are blessed. You have been sanctified by having made a fruitful pilgrimage to the Venkatachala. By the full grace of my master the sage Vyasa I was able to hear much about the saga of Sri Venkatachala. I have had the fortune to narrate it to you. Even then it is impossible for even the thousand headed Adi Sesha to completely describe the undiminishing greatness of Sri Venkatachala even for billions and billions of years, for such is its undiminishing greatness! However much one may speak about the power—*mahima* of the Deity Srinivasa it would still be only very little of it. It is endless! Only He would know the extent of His power! The meaning of His actions—*leela* only He would know! That is all!! That is all!!”

*srii venkatesasya kathaamrutam tvidam
maaahaatmya saaram sutapasvi gamyam
srii venkatesasya mahaapriya priyam
lokottaram deva rishi priyamcha*

The nectarine saga of Sri Venkateswara which we have come to know will curb birth and death. The wonderful amazing acts of Sri Swami are all of

the best of the best. This wealth of knowing comes to them by the special grace of god. It is enough to listen to the sagas of Srinivasa! Suffice to sing of them! Even remembering these with all mind and heart will do! Srinivasa will consider these as dear to Him. He grants what is dear even to the gods *rishis*, sages over the world, it is said!

*samasta papaugha vinaasa kaaranam
samasta punyaugha samridhdhi kaaranam
srii venkatesasya paadaaravindayoh
sadbhakti vridhdhe rasamaana kaaranam*

The divine saga of Srinivasa causes destruction of all sins. It enhances even more greatly the wealth of good deeds. It enhances devotion and *prapatti* sincerity for his feet. Hence read it. Read the story of Srinivasa again and again. Make others also read it. Have others read it too. Narrate the divine power of Srinivasa to the delight of listeners' ears. Those who read it, those who hear it and those who narrate it – may they all be granted the boons in abundance from Sri Venkatesa!

Om namo Venkatesaya!!!

* * *

Anandamayam It is Joy All Through

The names of the God of Tirumala Sri Venkateswara are innumerable.! One of them is the “Dweller of Ananda Nilaya” which is the most known name. And it is also the most appropriate one too!

Intending to go on a pilgrimage to Tirumala is itself joyful! Setting towards Tirumala along with the family members is a matter of wordless immense joy! To saunter in the hill ranges! The new experiences which give an altogether strange joy! And when one raises one’s head in order to have a look at the tower of “golden dwelling”! It is a self-absorbing divine joy! And to have just a moment’s wide eyed glance of the Lord of Seven Hills waiting for his devotees, oh, it suffices! it suffices!! It is not possible to describe in words this experience nor the joy one feels. Every devotee experiences these inexpressible feelings of joy. Each time that one has a view of the auspicious Him-Sri *Varu*, come inexpressible feelings of joy.

Who is He, who with a single glance of a moment alone bestows divine experiences, He who is renowned for being the “royal dispenser of desired boons”, He who draws crores of devotees and keeps them close to Him, who is He? From whence did he come? Why did He come? What are the Seven Hills? What is the saga of these hills? Why should the Dweller of Ananda Nilayam be here at all? Was there anyone who had been here prior to His coming?

The answer to all these questions is this **Ananda Nilayam**. In addition it also tells blessed divine stories of His devotees, the power of the holy streams in there, the observances and performance of duties in the region, and the details about donations that should be made in this sacred place. Such is this book named **Ananda Nilayam. Please read it! And make others too go through the book!**

OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

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