

# MATRU SRI TARIGONDA VENGAMAMBA – CONTRIBUTION TO MUSIC

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## **Introduction:**

Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba was a 18<sup>th</sup> century poet and a staunch devotee of Lord Venkateswara, who wrote numerous poems and songs on the lord.

Vengamamba was born into a Brahmin family in 1730 in Tarikonda village from Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh state. Her parents were Krishnamatya and Mangamamba. Since childhood she was an ardent devotee of lord Venkateswara and her devotion made the villager's believe that she was insane. Married at very early age she lost her husband Venkatachalapathi and became a child widow. However she refused to accept anyone but the lord as her husband and continued to dress as a married woman. She studied Yoga Sciences under Acharya Subramanya. Soon she faces resentment of local priest in Tarigonda and shifted to tirumala.

She penned many great works on Tarigonda Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy and on Sri Venkateswara swamy of Tirumala. She pioneered Annaprasadam distribution in Tirumala and was fondly called by devotees as **MATRU SRI**.

Vengamamba prays the lord all time and lived in Mandapa of the temple. She used to worship lord and had darshan everyday. She used to sing slokas in extempore on him. Sri Atmaramadas head of Mahanth Mutt himself met her and arranged suitable place for her to live in Tirumala. She was not satisfied by singing, praying and meditation in Tirumala. She started serving the lord with Tulasi and garlands in morning and Harathi in evening.

Moved by her devotion it is told that lord Venkateswara allowed her to enter the temple after temple hours to hear piems and songs. She recited poems and took Harathi of the lord each night and paid the pearls in sanctum over a period of time. The priest investigation

led to Vengamamba. Their punishment was to exile her out of Tirumala. She then reached Tumburukona and lived for 6 years there with Chenchu tribes.

But on the other side practice of penance and night Harathi continue for 6 years. Eventually the priests realized their folly, and recognised her devotion, dedication and requested to return.

## **LITERARY WORKS OF TARIGONDA VENGAMAMBA:**

Her first poem was Tarigonda Narasimha satakam and it was followed by Nrusimha Vilasa Katha, Siva Natakam, Balakrishna Natakam as Yakshagana and Rajayogamrutha saram a Dvipada Kavyam. These works were completed when she was in Tarigonda.

On her return to Tirumala from Tumburukona she composed Vishnu Parijatham, Jala Krida Vilasam, Mukthikantha Vilasam, Gopi Natakam, Rama Parinayam, Sri Krishna Manjari, Tathva Keerthanalu, Vashishta Ramayanam (Dvipada), Sri Venkatachala Mahatmyam (Padya Prabandham), Ashtanga Yogasaram (Padya Krithi).

Vengamamba was one of the more prolific authoress than most of the women writers who preceeded her. Three of her metrical works in Telugu are THE BHAGAVATHA, THE RAJAYOGA SARA, and VENKATACHALA MATMYA. Her language is sweet and descriptions especially of erotic subjects are free from the excesses which mar the compositions of others. The popularity of Vengamamba rests more upon Rajayogasara. It serves as introduction to yoga philosophy and is read with avidity by many who devote their lives to the cultivation of spirit.

Rajayogasaram is a spiritual discourse between Kapila Maharshi and his mother Devahooti. Later she composed Bhagavatham in couplets. It covers conversation between Aswathama and Draupati. She wrote Dwadhasa (12) skandhas of Bhagavatha in Dvipadhas to make them reach to people of all sects and used spoken telugu of that time. She also used a simplified literature and making them aware of fact that each and everyone can experience god and give themselves to the supreme immortal. Later she composed Venkatachala Mahatmya. Her every thought, word and deed was centered of god vividly and dedicated her book to lord himself.

She expressed complicated yoga sadhanas in simplified manner. Srungara rasa in ramaneya manner. Yoga thatva aspects in scientific way. Anger,emotional stand towards beloved ones in heart touching manner.

If one observes her literary works carefully one is sure to find a steady rise in spiritual maturity revealed in Yakshaganas and those that were titled at times as Natakam i.e., Jalakrida vilasam, Gopi natakam etc., Though written in spoken Telugu of her times, there is as intrinsic poetic value that cannot be delineated in the sweetest tones. There is glaring wisdom from the earlier verses like Narasimha satakam which are more devotional.

One of the important literary work that could be spoken of was Gopi natakam. There is a treatise on spiritualism narrated in simplest of tones. It forms into episodes dealing with souls journey through life and beyond death. There is also a graphical description of womb and the gestation cycle, the birth(Viniki Ghattam), life after death ( Yagnapattu) and finally the annihilation of Ego (Tripurasura samhara) to realise the ultimate Truth. All this is placed in conversation format between a milkmaid(gollabhama) and a Brahmin. The poetess choose a milkmaid because the dairy community is a symbolic interface between the vedic class and the others in social hierarchy from time immemorial. Freedom of expression is a milkmaid forte. The milkmaid is a symbol of illusory world as she can transform the milk ( ultimate truth) into curd, butter, ghee ( unreal real).

Hence she is addressed as Mohanangi who actually dispels ignorance, combats ego and bestows wisdom in the end. She is the direct descendent of saviour Krishna. The Gopi Natakam is a satire condemning the sacrificial rites propagated and presided over by the priestly class eschews meat. There is irony in this fact. The languages colloquial Telugu with sarcasm and with interlaced **Janmana Jaayathe sudraha, Karmana jaayathe dwijaha, Vedadhyayane cha viprathvam, Brahma gyanena Brahmanaha.**

### **Elucidating keerthanas of Matru Sri:**

Despite of her siddhahastha in writing different types of Krithis and satakas .... she spoke about herself as small kid trying to speak in front of her parents. The following sentences impart the purity of her mind that she has started with, in her writing namely Venkatachala Mahatmya.

**Na chinanata nonamalunaina na**

**Charyula chenthane jadhuvaledu**

**Parugu chandhassulo badhi badhyamulaina**

**Nikkamuga nenu neraledu**

**Lalikaavya naatalankaara sasthanu**

**Lveenunainanu vinagaledu**

**Poorvethihaasa vispurithaandhrandha sathkruthu**

**Lssodhinchi varusaga joodaledu**

**Cheri tarigondapuri naarasimhadevapu**

**Daanathichina reethiga ne nimitha**

**Mathramuna balkudhunu svasaamarthyamivva**

**Dharaya ninchuka yeeni naa yandhu ledu**

She mentioned about herself as if she does not possess expertise awareness about alankara sashtra, Thalasa or ragas. But her beloved god Tarigonda Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy blessings are the only roots of her writings.

These words impart the purity of her soul, Chastity in heart and clarity in thought and finally giving thyself to the divine spirit. The ultimate stage a soul can reach is giving oneness and ignoring the presence of self. This can be clearly observed with Vengamamba imparted from her writings.

Some important keethanas from Matru sri's writings were:

In gurusthuthi keerthana about Aadhi Sankaracharya she said **“Guruni sannuthimpare – nishkalanka paramayoga mabhyasimparee”** taking a call to know the ultimate spiritual truth. Also **“Sthoola sookshma kaaranamula moolamarayare”** which mean the to see the sookshma roopa which is in the sthoola sareera and also to know the kaarana sareera which is inner to both the above roopas .... Also to recognise the reason behind the sthoola sookshma roopas i.e., kaarana sareena and to discover the root cause of karana roopa. Also... **“moodu rendlu dhaati paina meda jerare”** here the inner meaning represents knowing the Shatchakras (3\*2=6) namely Mooladhara, Swadhishtana,

Manipooraka, Anahatham, Vishudha, Aagna.. to go above all and discover the **Sahasrara**. This is what the writing named mukthi kantha vilasam actually means which is also called Moksha. In the same keerthana she also said “**chakkaga thriveni naduma jalakamadare**” which in general mean the triveni sangama of rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi but actually means to know about trigunas namely sattva, rajas, tamas and reach a state where human body to go beyond three gunas i.e., attainment of state called as Gunatheetha and gave a call to reach brahmapatha bestowing towards the feet of Tarigonda Narasimha.

Shobhane dharuvu explains about the Arishadvargas i.e., kama, krodha, lobha, moha, madha and maathsarya the need to overcome all of them in this keerthana. Also it was mentioned “**jaatha, jara, mruthi rahithunaku - sanmoksha sahithunaku sobhane**” viz., liberate from the cycles of birth, ageing and death representing the way of attaining liberation to soul and impart spiritual progress of Vengamamba. “**Sarvam brahmamayam – sadguru raayam**” representing the way Matru sri has visualized Brahman in all the species of Earth as well as the Universe. “**Trigunalanu anachi - dheeratvaanni gachare**” saying to be the consciousness of the conscious and visualize the paramathma.

“**Mayalo mayainadhamma ! dhaani mahima teliyagoodadhamma!**” i.e., the illusion in illusion filled world was explained imbued with glory. Here she clearly illustrated that soul should not get stuck in maya.

Mayalona putti mayalona perigi

Maya teliyanivadu manujudela

Maya teliyani vadu marmagna yogira

Visvadhahirama vinura vema !!

This words by Vemana could be clearly apt to the keerthana.

The truth that swaroopa of God was no confined to a form or name but was universal “**evariche chikkadhoyamma! Dhaani vidhimittidhani chepparaadhugadhamma**” was clearly embedded in this sankeerthana.

To society that was fighting with caste, religion, creed, gender disagreements Vengamamba gave a sharp challenge as

“**Bramhamedho theluparayya bramhanulara!**”

**Parabramhamedho theluparayya bramhanulara!!”** with this keerthana she has spread a spiritual revolution proving bramhathattva is not confined to caste or religion hence establishing the true meaning of it.

**“Yagna krathuvulanuchu miru - yogamu yagamu chesi**

**Bhargo devasya dheemahi savithru – rbhavathi bhavam beriginanduku”** illustrating the true meaning of yagnas, krathus and all yagas.

**“Sivudante nemi? Ke – savudante nemi? Siva kesavula chitta – sthithi bedhamevi?”**

Hence explained the oneness of Siva kesava in unique manner.

Through many more sankeerthanas such as Gananayaka, Jayajaya nigamantha, Srimandhana gopala, Baala gopalam, etc., Vengamamba tried a lot to get the society out of Ignorance and Darkness. Each keerthana is known to be a Mahamanthra , the sankeerthana Mntras serve even today as Divyamrutha in the journey of soul from Humanity to Divinity. Thus Vengamamba contributed in establishing the spirituals truths through musical works in form of sankeerthanas, Satakas, Krithis to make the future generations aware of what the actual truth that is meant to be related with the liberation of the soul.

Coming to **conclusion**, book published by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams named Matru Sri Tarigonda Vengamamba Sankeerthana ravali that has Muthyala Harathi in Surati ragam and Thrisra Aadhi Thalam.

Sri Pannagadri varasikharagra vasunaku

Papandhakara ghana Bhaskarunaku

aa parathmunakunu nityannapalini aina

maa pali Alamelu mangammaku

Jayamangalam Nitya Subhamangalam

Jayamangalam Nitya Subhamangalam

Serananna dasulaku varamitthunani

birudu dhariyinchiyunna paradaivamunaku

Maruvaladeebirudu nirathamani pathini

yemaraneeyanalamelu mangammaku

ananda nilayamandanisembu vaseinchi

deenulanu rakshinchu devunakunu

kanukalanonagurchi ghanamuga vibhuni

sanmaninchu alamelu mangammaku

paramosaga naavanthu narulakani

vaikunTam arachetha choopu jagadathmunakunu

sirulosaga thanavanthu siddhamani nayakuni

uramupai koluvunna seradhi suthaku

thelivitho mudupulitu themmu themmani parusha

nalikhinchi gaikonedu achyuthunaku

elami pakambu cheyinchu andarikanna

malayakepudosage maha maathaku

mariyu chithra vichithra mantapavalulakunu

thiruvedhulaku divya theerthamulaku

paragha ghana gopura prakara thathulakunu

chiramulai thagu kanaka sikharamulaku

tharchaina dharmasatramulakunu phalapushpa

bharitha srungara vana pankthulakunu

muruvompu ugranamulaku bokkasamulaku

sarasambulaku pakasalalakunu

ahivairi mukhyamavahanamulaku godugulaku

rahinoppu makara thoranamulakunu

bahavidhadwajamulaku patuvadya vithathulaku

vihitha sathkalyana vedikalaku

dharachakra mukhyasadhanamulaku manimaya-

bharana divyambara prathathulakunu

karacharana mukhyanga ganasahithamai  
subhankaramaina divya mangalamurthiki

kalitha sugnyanadi kalyana gunamulaku  
balamoppunavi thathprabhavamunaku  
balagonina sakalaparivaradevathalakunu  
chelagi panulonarinchu sevakulaku

alaraga brahmotsavadulai santhathamu  
balanoppu nityotsavambulakunu  
Polupundu viswaprabhuthvamoolambulaku  
naluvondu varavimanambulakunu

araya THARIGONDA NARAHARI agachu nandariki  
varamulosage SREENIVASUNAKUNU  
muriyuchunu viswathonmukhunitlu bhariyinchu  
sirulamerayuchunundu seshadriki

Jayamangalam nitya subhamangalam  
Jayamangalam nitya subhamangalam

Since lord accepted Vengamamba's devotion her harathi had been incorporated into Ekantha seva performed to lord each night. A descendent of Vengamamba pays pearls as fee and Harathi is called Vengamamba Harathi. It has become a practice even today in Tirumala temple to have Harathi before closing the temple.

Despite individual contributions to the cause of Vengamamba's poetic literature, there still remains a vast area grey and the onerous task ahead to retrieve what is left of the manuscripts and immortalise them in digital/print archives for the future generation on to know how rich a heritage the Telugu land bestowed upon us.

