



PILGRIM SERVICES OF TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTANAMS, ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract

The temple of Sri Venkateswara has acquired unique sanctity in Indian religious lore. The Sastras, Puranas, Sthala Mahatyams and Alwar hymns unequivocally declare that, in the Kali Yuga, one can attain mukti (salvation) only by worshipping Venkata Nayaka or Sri Venkateswara. TTD provides a wide range of facilities to make pilgrimage a unique spiritual experience. The target groups for Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams to provide facilities are devotees and donors. Unless their views and perceptions are obtained and analysed it is not possible to draw inferences about the facilities provided to them. The name Tirupati, meaning the „the Lord of Lakshmi“ should have been appropriately applied to the village on the Venkatachala Hill, the abode of the Lord. However, it has been popularly assigned to the Municipal town at the foot of the Hill, while the village around the Hill near His temple is called Tirumala (the Sacred Hill). The temple of Sri Venkateswara has acquired unique sanctity in Indian religious lore. The Sastras, Puranas, Sthala Mahatyams and Alwar hymns unequivocally declare that, in the Kali Yuga, one can attain mukti, only by worshipping Venkata Nayaka or Sri Venkateswara. The benefits acquired by a pilgrimage to Venkatachala are mentioned in the Rig Veda and Asthadasa Puranas. In these epics, Sri Venkateswara is described as the great bestower of boons. There are several legends associated with the manifestation of the Lord at Tirumala. The temple has its origins in Vaishnavism, an ancient sect which advocates the principles of equality and love, and prohibits animal sacrifice. The sanctum sanctorum which houses the awe-inspiring idol of the Lord of the Seven Hills is situated in the main temple complex of Tirumala. There are several legends associated with the manifestation of the Lord in Tirumala. This paper is study on Pilgrim Services of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

Key Words: Tirumala, Tirupati, Devasthanams, Temple, Pilgrim, Services, sanctorum.

Introduction

The Balaji Temple at Tirumala represents a living tradition, attracting millions of devotees from all parts of the country. Tirumala, in the Eastern Ghats in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh, is a cluster of hills with a range of seven principal peaks, each of which is considered sacred and bears a name of special significance. Situated at a height of 2,980 feet above the sea level, it enjoys salubrious and invigorating climate. Tirumala and Tirupati are considered to be the most sacred and world-renowned twin pilgrim centres, the former being the abode the famous Hill Shrine of Lord Venkateswara. A pilgrim strongly believes that a visit to Tirumala Temple and the glimpse of Lord Venkateswara at least on in his life time will bring heavenly bliss and salvation to his there life. Call Him by any name Lord balaji or Govinda or Srinivasa, he is considered to be the ultimate spiritual destination for Hindus all over the world.

The temple of Tirumala has been going through many phases of its glorious long history, during which the temple management has undergone phenomenal changes. In its early phase, the temple was managed by private individuals interested in religious activity. Gradually, the temple attracted royal patronage and a regular control. Later, the temple administration passed from the royal patronage into the hands of the colonial rulers. The British later transferred the responsibility of the temple management to the Mahants whose imperfect management of the temple prompted the government to take over the management and to transfer the responsibility to the TTD, a trust, created by the Government itself. Over the years, the TTD has evolved into a virtual state within a state as its revenues have grown at a remarkable rate, from multifarious sources. An attempt is made in this chapter to present an overview of the evolution of the general and financial management of the TTD and to study the financial management in the TTD.



Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD)

The history of the management of the TTD, right from the period of records available, is classified into five categories and reviewed in the study i.e. Management of TTD by Kings and Rulers, Management of TTD by Muslim Rulers, Management of TTD by the East India Company, Management of TTD under Mahants, Management of the TTD by the Government after Mahants. Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams is a premier religious and social welfare institution administering a group of 12 subtemples in and around Tirupati along with Sri Venkateswara Temple. Besides this, it also undertakes various philanthropic, charitable, educational and medical services across the country. The mission of TTD is thus the visit of every pilgrim should ensure a spiritual experience and help him achieve a devotional ecstasy. Prior to the British rule, the management of the institution was under the ruler of this part of the country. The management, after the advent of the British reign, passed into the hands of East India Company and subsequent to the enactment of Regulation VII of the 1817 of Madras Code, was camped on under the control of Board of Revenue through collector of the district. With reference to a dispatch of the year 1841 from the Court of Directors ordering the immediate withdrawal from all interference of officers of the government with native temples and temples of religious sort, the management of the temple was made over in 1843 to Seva Doss, the head of the Mutt called Hathiramaji Mutt situated in the Tirupati town. The management of TTD was transferred to, and vested in, a TTD Committee in 1933 by the Madras Act of 1933 which was replaced by an enactment in 1951 entrusting the administration of the TTD to a Board of Trustees. An executive officer was also appointed by the State Government. In 1966, the Andhra Pradesh Government enactment "Andhra Pradesh Charitable and Hindu Religious Institution and Endowments Act, 1966" under which, the TTD formed an integral part of the Hindu Religious Institutions Endowment in the State of Andhra Pradesh.

Apart from the general administration, it is the financial management that matters as the managerial efficiency is glaringly reflected in financial terms. The action of the officials at all levels involves the financial implications for the future of the organization. The scope of financial management of any organization encompasses the system of financial administration and the norms on which the system should be based. The central purpose of the financial management is to facilitate the maximization of output or satisfaction, with minimum resources. The TTD, which is essentially run with the funds collected in different forms from the devotees, is no exception to this principle. The devotees, who make different types of contribution to the temple, expect the management to use the funds judiciously to perpetuate the temple rituals and to provide amenities for the pilgrims visiting the temple.¹

Tourism is a vibrant subsector of India contributing significantly to employment and income generation and foreign exchange earnings. Besides, expenditure on tourism has multiple ripple effects of far-reaching nature along its value chain, which conduces economic growth having a favourable impact on poverty alleviation. Tourism is an umbrella concept in which are subsumed sightseeing, holidaying, education, attending important events, business, etc. Apart from its economic ramifications, it has a social purpose of bringing people together from diverse cultures across the globe, promoting cross-cultural relationships and understanding.²

Review of Literature

Cater, (2010). The study "Steps to Space; Opportunities for Astro Tourism" offers an over view of recent development in the space tourism industry as a whole, and offers definition for the new sector of astro tourism. Drawing on motivational theory, the study examines the motivations and experiences that astro tourists have demonstrated through interviews reported through the media. However, parallels are demonstrated with the existing terrestrial space tourism industry, which has been largely ignored to date.³

G Vijay, (2012) In "Developmental Dimensions and Pilgrimage Tourism (with special reference to Karimnagar District of Andhra Pradesh)" states that Karimnagar District has its own place in the map of Andhra Pradesh Cultural tourism in view of its glorious heritage in the form of magnificent cultural monuments and antiquities are overflowing with rich art and architecture. Inadequacy of funds is the major problems faced by state Government. So, the author recommends that the Central Govt. has to take up the responsibility of augmenting the



developmental activities initiated by the State Govt., with allocation of adequate funds at proper time, so that the pilgrimage tourism may be developed not only in the study regions but throughout the country.⁴

Vijayanand, (2012) in the study “Pilgrimage tourism Management issues and Challenges with reference to Tamilnadu” states that Tamilnadu has lot of pilgrimage potentialities. There are lot of problems faced by the pilgrimage tourists, the problem starts from railway/bus station itself. When pilgrims reach the place they had to face heavy traffic problems for food, drinking water, parking facilities, accommodation, language, communication facilities, toilet facilities and the problem of security. But still the pilgrims are satisfied with different facilities. The author recommended for increasing the number of Dharmasalas by the side of pilgrim sites.⁵

Bhat, (2013) In the study “Tourism industry and Pilgrimage Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir Prospects and Challenges” states that the problem of tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir are poor road, lack of basic hygienic amenities, no standardisation of rates and fares, poor maintenance of heritage sites, issues regarding security and harassments and lack of passionate and trained professionals. According to him Jammu and Kashmir need a very special focus for the development of basic infrastructure to attract pilgrims in huge numbers.⁶

Objective

The following are the specific objective of the study:

1. To study the Pilgrim Services of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, Andhra Pradesh

Data Sources

Secondary sources have been adopted for study. Various newspapers, Journals, Articles, websites and dissertations have been accessed to collect the information for study.

Pilgrim Services of TTD

TTD is the largest religious body in the country both in terms of the number of pilgrims it attracts and the income it earns. The activities of TTD are wide ranging, from management of the darshan, through transport food to pilgrims in the form of annadanam, accommodation, and tonsure to management of a large number of educational, medical and charitable institutions in India to the procurement of supplies. Give the size and the complexity of the functions it performs, TTD can be viewed as a Mini-government. The following services are provided by TTD to pilgrims making their pilgrimage comfortable. The service is listed hereunder are in the order of their utilization by pilgrims during their stay at Tirupati and Tirumala.

1. Bus Stations at Tirupati

At Tirupati there are five bus stations catering to the needs of pilgrims. Pilgrims arriving by train can use SVBS, Sri Venkateswara Bus Station, located just opposite to the Tirupati Railway Station. Whenever trains arrive, buses are stationed right in front of the main gate of the railway station for the convenience of pilgrims. Balaji Link Bus Station (BLBS) is situated at Alipiri, at the foot of the hills, has ample space for parking tourist buses and vans. Srinivasam bus station (SBS) is located in the campus of Srinivasam accommodation complex for the convenience of pilgrims staying at Madhavarn & Srinivasam complexes; Sathagiri Link Bus station (SLBS) is located in the Central Bus Station Complex. Sri Padmavathi Bus Station (SPBS) is located behind Railway Station and caters mainly to the needs of pilgrims arriving in tourist buses.

2. Accommodation

TTD provides accommodation facilities to pilgrims. It has constructed over 7000 cottages, guest houses and choultries both at Tirupati and Tirumala, charging nominal service charges for most of the rooms. TTD provides he-accommodation to pilgrims who ill-afford paid accommodation while staying in Tirupati and Tinunala. Further, to ease the demand of accommodation, TTD has built Public Amenities Complexes at both Tirupati and Tirumala providing dormitory type accommodation with free of cost.



3. Srivari Darshan

The core aspect of pilgrimage is darshan. More than fifty thousand pilgrims a day visit Sri Venkateswara Temple on normal days, which will peak to 80,000 to 100,000 in weekends, Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays.

3.1. Free Darshan or Sarva Darshan

Sarva darshan means 'darshan for all at free of cost. On normal days, sarva darshan is allotted about 16 to 18 hours, and on peak days 20 hours. Sarva Darshan is through Queue complex II. Pilgrims can have the free darshan in Tirumala.

3.2. Divya Darshan

Divya Darshan facility is provided through VQCI for pedestrians coming to Tirumala through Alipiri or Srivari Mettu foot-paths. Biometric counters are established in both these foot-paths to allot free darshan' tokens to pilgrim pedestrians.

3.3. Paid Darshan

TTD provides paid Darshans to pilgrims keeping in view their conveyance, performance and affordability. The payment of these darshans vary from Rs. 50 to a few thousands in the case of special darshan and arjitha sevas.

4. Temple Darshan

The pilgrims having access to multiple darshan streams, ultimately join two queue lines which merge into a single stream just before they enter into temple through Mahadwaram. Two kinds of darshan, viz., laghu darshan in which pilgrims are permitted for darshan up to the point of Ramulavari meda and Mahalaghu darshan in which pilgrims are permitted up to the point of Jaya Vijayulu statues are practiced. Usually laghu darshan is provided to pilgrims, whereas mahalaghu darshan is resorted to only during periods of heavy pilgrim rush to clear large crowds of them.

5. Mode of Booking Darshan

Pilgrims can book their darshan either on spot on arrival at Tirupati and or Tirumala, or from their native places. Free darshan can be booked only on arrival, Rs. 50 darshan on arrival or in advance through post, on internet, or at TTD information centres. Some of the arjitha sevas can also be booked in advance by the above mentioned means or booked on arrival one day in advance.

6. Prasadams and Laddus

After Darshan Prasadam is distributed free of cost to pilgrims inside the temple before their exit from the temple. The pilgrims while moving in queues for free Darshan are issued one or two laddu tokens at concessional rate in the queue. Complexes are before their entry into the temple. The pilgrims, having been issued laddu token, exchange them after Darshan to get laddus in the counters located by the side of temple. For this availing Seegradarshan, Sudarshan Darshan & Sevas laddus are provided with on the tickets after the Darshan. In addition, laddus can be had at other than concessional prices on all days at the bank counters outside the temple, obtaining laddu tokens from the bank counters situated along the queue lines. On an average around 1.50 to 2.00 lakhs laddus are sold daily.⁷

Conclusion

Organisation and services TTD provides to pilgrims, and analyses the past trends of pilgrim utilisation of darshan and free meals services and projects the same till 2020. TTD provides services like transportation, accommodation, tonsure, darshan, prasadam, free meals and other miscellaneous services. These services can be classified into sacred and secular services on the basis of the motive of pilgrims for availing them. Alternatively these services can be classified into free, paid and free and paid services on the basis of payment of money involved for availing them. Finally pilgrim utilisation of darshan, tonsure and free meal services was projected till



2020 which showed that the demand for these services will be increasing in future. Generally speaking the management of the Tirumala temple by the Mahants was satisfactory and there was all round noticeable improvement in the repairs and renovation work of the temple and in the facilities offered to the pilgrims. One of the major advantages of the new accounting system is the treatment of Hundi collections of the TTD as an addition to the 'Corpus Fund'. The pilgrims make donations for the perpetuation of the Temple rituals and for the provision of basic amenities for those visiting the temple on a sustained basis. The pilgrim is very much satisfied of the TTD services provided in present days.

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