



# Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Programmes it's Impact on Pilgrims – A Study

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## Abstract

*Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Dissemination of information is a key role. Pilgrims from different places, different language and different cultures, different backgrounds, different attitudes are visiting Tirumala every day. They are very anxious about the information and guidance. Dissemination of information to the pilgrims is the duty of the organization to facilitate them and make their pilgrimage more convenient. In this context the present study attains greater significance to assess the information dissemination role of the largest pilgrim centre, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams. The study further broadly aims at surveying the opinions of pilgrims about the modes of setting information about Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams and making a comparison of both the findings appropriately.*

**Keywords:** Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Pilgrims, Seva's (Services)

## Introduction

The Tirumala is situated at highest 2,980 feet above the sea level and enjoys salubrious and invigorating climate. Above 40 to 50 thousands of pilgrims are visiting the Tirumala every day and an average of 70 thousands at peak seasons. The pilgrims visiting Tirumala are from different states, places, languages, cultures, status. Dissemination of information to such people having different faiths and beliefs is a major task and is a very important job. Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanams is using all forms of media to inform pilgrims.

In this context, the present study attains greater significance to assess the information dissemination role of the largest pilgrim centre Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanams. It is also felt ideal to study and evaluate the existing status of public relation department and to extent necessary suggestions for modification of the same.

## Methodology

The survey methodology is popular form of qualitative analysis, hence the present study is a survey. Researcher has employed all her skills in systematic gathering of information about the profile of Public Relations Department and the activities of the Public Relations Department of Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanams.

For the study the researcher employed a survey method. The sample consists 100 pilgrims by using convenience sampling method.

**Objectives:** i. To study the opinion of a cross section of pilgrims about the information facilities available. ii.

iii. To study the mass media used for publicity by Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanams.

**History:** The Pallavas of Kanchipuram (9<sup>th</sup> century AD), Cholas of Tanjor (10<sup>th</sup> century), Pandyas of Mathura and Vijayanagara Pradhans (14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) were committed devotees of Lord Venkateswara. The statues of Sri Krishna Devaraya and his spouse stand in the premises of the temple. After the decline of Vijayanagara Empire, Kings from various states like the king of Mysore and Gadwal, worshiped the lord as pilgrims and gifted various ornaments and valuables to the temple. In 1951 another Hindu Religious and endowment Act was made which facilitated the appointment of an executive officer and Board of Trustees and they run the administration. Tirupati Venkateswara Temple is a famous Hindu temple of Lord Venkateswara located in the hill town Tirumala, Andhra Pradesh. The temple is located on the Venkatachalam hill that forms part of the seven hills of Tirumala and hence the temple is also known as the *Temple of Seven Hills* (Edukondalu in Telugu). The presiding deity of the temple, Lord Venkateswara also known by other names – *Balaji or Srinivasa*.

**Darshan and Queue System:** Tirumala temple and Vaikuntam Queue Complex (Semicircular building in the foreground) as seen from Srivaari Paadalu on Narayanagiri hill. Tirumala possibly has the most elaborate arrangement in India to sequence and guide visiting devotees through the holy shrine. Due to the ever increasing rush of devotees during all 365 days in a year, the temple authorities have setup a virtual queue system. This has resulted in a steep drop in time that individual devotees need to spend within the Queue Complex leading to the main temple, from the earlier 6 to 8 hours by the early 1990s to about one to one and half hours typically.

There are two kinds of Darshan (meaning a glimpse of the Lord) at the temple. One is Dharma Darshanam – free, and usually taking 10 hours from the time you enter the Queue Complex – and the other is Sudarshanam – Costing Rs. 50, and taking about 3 – 4 hours. There are also some more expensive options where the time taken is lower, such as the Nija Pada Darshanam costing Rs.100/-.

**Arjitha Seva (Paid Services):** Pilgrims can view and participate (in a limited fashion) in the various sevas performed to Dhruva bera (main idol), Bhoga Srinivasa, Sri Malayappa swami and other idols in the temple. When pilgrims purchase Arjitha Seva tickets, they get the opportunity to see a seva performed to the Lord, obtain prasadam in the form of vastram (clothes), ashantalu (sac red and blessed rice) and food articles (Laddus, Vadas, Dosas, Pongal, Rice items) and a Darshan of the Ustava mruti.

**Facilities at Tirumala: Facilities to pilgrims walking up the Hills:** Many pilgrims walk up the hills as a part of their vow to the Lord. The Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanams have provided the following facilities to them: i. Transportation of luggage free of charge to Tirumala. The pilgrims can deposit their luggage at any of the Choultries in Tirupati, or at the toll gate at Alipiri, against a token and take delivery of the central reception office counter at Tirumala. ii. Provision for cooking at Galigopuram, Chittiyekkudu, Mamanduru Mitta, Narasimhaswami temple, Mokallamitta and other places. iii. Availability of drinking water all along the foot-path. iv. Facility of canteen runs under hygienic conditions by the voluntary organization “ISKCON” at Mamanduru Mitta (Seventh mile). v. Availability of toilets. vi. Provision of sunshade at important points for taking rest. vii. Arrangements for patrol by security guards, Gurkhas and Police all along the road throughout day and night to prevent unwary pilgrims from being cheated or robbed by unscrupulous elements. viii. Relay of religious programmes through local broadcasting system.

**Canteen Complex:** Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Canteen Complex with most modern amenities provides wholesome food at moderate prices.

**Free Meals:** The wholesome free food (full meals) in the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Canteen Complex will be provided to the devotees from 10.a.m to 11 p.m continuously on production of free meals coupons distributed inside the temple after worshipping the Lord.

**Free Medical Aid:** Pilgrims are given free medical aid at Aswini Hospital near Seshadri Nagar.

**Free Bus:** Facilities are available for pilgrims at Tirumala. Four buses are operated on prescribed routes for the benefit of

pilgrims covering cottages, Choultries, temples and other places.

**Sale of Gold and Silver Dollars:** Gold and Silver Dollars with the images of Lord Venkateswara and Goddess Padmavathi are available for sale at the counter inside the Temple near Vimana Venkateswara Swamy and TTD (Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams) Administration Buildings, Tirupati.

**Kalyanakatta:** There is a Kalyanakatta for fulfilling the vow of tonsure to the Lord. Tonsure facilities are also available at cottages. Please do not pay any amount to barbers. The tariff at Kalyanakatta Rs. 2.00 at cottages Rs.10.00.

**Railway Booking Office:** This booking office located at the central Reception Office, will issue tickets including reservation tickets for bus-cum-train journey.

**Automobile Clinic:** A mobile van with mechanics and spares is available to the repairs of the vehicles stranded on the Ghat roads. The toll Gates either at Tirupati or at Tirumala may be contacted.

**Oral / Personal Communication:** Oral or personal communication is carried through information centers at Tirumala and outside, may i help you centers and scouts and guides.

**May I help you Centers:** It is the latest arrangement made by the Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanams at Tirumala for providing information to the pilgrims. These are engaged by the retired employees of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams on consolidated payment basis. They provide all information of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams to the pilgrims. They also provide all types of pamphlets, brochures and leaflets etc., for different sevas and donation scheme of these centers are also located at Railway Station, Bus Stand and Airports at Tirupati.

**Under the seva, Pilgrims Can Offer Their Voluntary Service in the Following Areas:** Annadanam, Queue Lines, Kalyana Katta, Gardens, Clock Rooms, Vaikuntam Queue Complex, Free Luggage Center, Pilgrims Amenities Complexes, Information Centers, Vigilance, Health, Central Reception Office (CRO).

The pilgrims are free to choose the area according to their interest and aptitude. They may make spot registration at the cell functioning opposite to Annadanam Complex. Groups consisting of not less than 10 members and ready to work for at least one week may participate in the seva on prior intimation and they will be provided with free food and accommodation at Tirumala.

**The Information Booklets Carry's Information:** i. Tirumala History, ii. Do's and Don'ts at Tirumala Pilgrimage a pleasant

one, iii. How to make Tirumala pilgrimage a pleasant one, iv. How to reach Tirumala, v. Accommodation available at Tirupati, vi. Advance reservation at Tirumala.

Donation schemes booklet provides the information regarding the overview, significance,

Donation amount, Mode of Payment, Privileges of the following schemes: i. Guidelines to the donors, ii. Sri Venkateswara Pranadana Trust, iii. Sri Balaji Arogyavaraprasadini scheme, iv. Sri Balaji institute of surgery, research and Rehabilitation for the disable trust

**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams is using the following the electronic / audio visual medium:** Radio, Television, I T (Website), Public Announcing System, Telephonem, Audio and Video Cassettes. CDs, Video on Wheels.

### Data Analysis

**Table-1**

**No of respondents visited Tirumala for the first time**

Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	24	24.00
No	76	76.00
Total	100	100.00

From the table-1 it is inferred that 24 percentage of the pilgrims are coming to Tirumala for the first time the remaining 76 percentage have visited many times.

**Table-2**

**Getting information at their own place before leaving to Tirumala**

Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	65.00
No	35	35.00
Total	100	100.00

From the table-2 it is understood that 65 percentage of the pilgrims are aware of the information about Tirumala pilgrims at their own place before leaving to Tirumala the remaining 35 percentage have left their places to Tirumala without proper information.

**Table-3**

**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Information centre at their own place**

Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	76	76.00
No	24	24.00
Total	100	100.00

The table-3 concluded that 76 percentages of pilgrims have information centers at their own place and 24 percentages felt that they did not have information centers at their places.

**Table-4**

**Information about Accommodation**

Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	56	56.00
No	44	44.00
Total	100	100.00

From the table-4 it is indicated that 56 percentage of the pilgrims are getting information how to book accommodation at Tirumala and 44 percentage of the pilgrims are not aware of information regarding booking of accommodation.

**Table-5**

**Source of information on Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams**

Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Internal personal Communication	34	34.00
News Paper	8	08.00
Radio	10	10.00
TV	22	22.00
TTD Information Centers	18	18.00
Internet	8	08.00
Total	100	100.00

The table-5 indicated that 34 percentage of respondents felt that inter personal Communication is the major sources of information on Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams for them. 22 percentages felt TV, 18 percentage felt TTD information centers, 10 percentage felt Radio and 8 percentage felt Newspapers and internet.

### Conclusion

i. There are different wings managed by the Public Relation Department such as Printing press for propagation of Hindu Dharma, significance of the temple, Lord and for dissemination of information to make Tirumala pilgrimage a pleasant one. ii. Information is carried out through different means of communication. A mixed blend of appropriate media is being used for providing information to the pilgrims. iii. Pilgrims involvement is also noted down by making them part of the services offered by the institution with an innovative voluntary service Srivari Seva cell. iv. Press release is a regular feature which is sent very frequently as a routine information tool to the press. v. Press conferences are held during important functions of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams institutions. vi. Traditional media troupes are

managed by the institution well to inform the pilgrims in Andhra Pradesh and other southern states.

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