

EDITOR'S NOTE

H

ow do you find something new to write on a temple that was first mentioned in the ancient Tamil text *Silappathikaram*, which dates back to the second century CE? That was the question we faced when we decided to do this special volume on the Srivari Brahmotsavam. Much has been written about the Sri Venkateswara temple and its rituals over the years in newspapers and magazines, not to mention full-length books.

So, rather than focus merely on the history and practices of the temple — subjects on which we do have a couple of articles here — we decided to focus on its “back-office” and administration. And thus emerged ideas that have resulted in what we believe is a volume that provides 360 degree coverage of the Tirumala shrine.

The Hindu's Business Editor, Raghuvir Srinivasan, who anchored this publication, and the newspaper's correspondents in Tirumala and Tirupati, along with two photographers, focussed on specific story ideas that tell you how much the temple ‘earns’, how the money is invested, what systems are in place to manage the hundi and the mass of devotees who throng the temple every day.

Our writers visited the kitchen of the Nithya Annadanam scheme, surely one of the largest free meal schemes where about 60,000 people are fed every day, to learn first-hand about how it is managed, how provisions and vegetables are sourced, how it is funded, and finally, how the logistics of serving food to so many people non-stop from early morning until midnight, is managed.

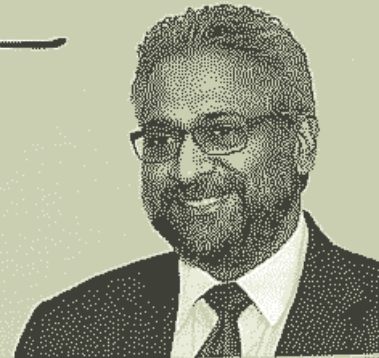
We have also focussed on the geological uniqueness of the Seven Hills where the shrine is located, and found out what happens to all the hair that is generated from all those tonsured heads.

The pride of place, though, belongs to the article on the nine-day Brahmotsavam, which really inspired this initiative. We do hope you enjoy reading this volume, which we believe is a collector's item, and in the end are enlightened about the temple and its operations.



Siddharth Varadarajan

Editor, The Hindu



FESTIVAL OF SPLENDOUR, POMP AND PAGEANTRY

A nine-day celestial spectacle when the Lord with his two divine consorts tours the mada streets mounted on different vahanams

C. Guruprasad Shukla



It is believed that Lord Brahma Himself descends on Tirumala to conduct the Brahmotsavam of Lord Venkateswara every year. A small blank chariot – Brahma ratham – moves ahead of the processions during the utsavam

The annual Brahmotsavam of Lord Venkateswara is a mega religious event conducted over nine days in the months of September and October. It attracts millions of devotees from all parts of the country.

Tremendous importance is attached to the festival, which overshadows all other festivities at the temple.

It is believed that Lord Brahma himself descends to earth to conduct the festival and hence the name – Brahmotsavam. *Sri Venkatesa Sashasranamastotra* contains specific references to Lord Brahma conducting the festival. A small empty chariot – 'Brahma ratham' – moves ahead of the twice-daily processions of the processional deity on the days of the festival.

The earliest reference to Brahmotsavam can be traced back to 966 CE, according to epigraphic inscriptions.

The inscriptions detail endowments made by Pallava Queen

Samavi for the conduct of the religious fair. Her descendants and other successive kings and emperors of different dynasties who ruled the place took it forward. According to epigraphic descriptions, the festival was performed as many as 12 times a year until 1582 CE.

In the present day, the very word Brahmotsavam reminds one of the extravaganza of the daily processions of the Lord on different *vahanams* (celestial vehicles), unprecedented pilgrim crowds and serpentine queue lines. Scores of bhajan groups go around the temple complex singing devotional songs in praise of the Lord, adding to the surcharged atmosphere.

The bejewelled processionary deities of Lord Malayappa Swamy and his two divine consorts, Sridevi and Bhoodevi, are brought out in a grand procession on different *vahanams* twice a day during the festival period, providing a celestial feast to the eyes of the devout. Each procession is preceded by several religious,

cultural and bhajan troupes battery of Vedic pundits recite *Divya Prabandham* heads the daily processions of the Lord on the guidance of the chief priest of the hill temple. Dozens of parisoned elephants, horses, bulls form part of the cavalcade in addition to the temple band.

The day before the Brahmotsavam, the commander-in-chief of the army of the Lord's don – Sri Vishwakshena – goes around the thoroughfares of the temple town supervising the arrangements. In the course of his inspections he collects the sacred water (*Mritsangruhanam*) required for the *yagasala* inside the temple.

As a prelude to the religious festival, priests ceremoniously carry out Ankurarpanam – the process of making a sankalp resolution to celebrate the utsavam inside the temple. *Na hanyams* – nine different grain seeds – are ceremonially sown for germination in new earthen pots at the *yagasala* inside the temple to symbolically usher in fertility, prosperity and plant

The bejewelled processional deities of Lord Malayappa Swamy and his two divine consorts, Sridevi and Bhoodevi, are brought out in a grand procession on different vahanams twice a day during the festival period, providing a celestial feast to the eyes of the devout

Dwajaroanam

This event is performed on the first day (evening) of the fete inside the temple, signalling the start of the Brahmotsavam. The sacred yellow flag with the imprint of Lord Garuda is ceremonially hoisted atop the flag post at the auspicious *subha muhurtham* amidst chanting of vedic hymns and to the rhythmic beat of temple drums.

Prior to the divine ceremony, the processional deities along with parivara deities like Anantha, Garuda, Chakra and Vishwakshena, are taken around the mada streets (four streets encircling the sacred shrine) in a grand procession.

It is widely believed that Lord Garuda goes round the temple complex extending invitations to all the supernatural powers like Yakshas, Gandharvas, Kinneras, Kimpurushas and Rishis and to the entire devatha community including Indra, Yama, Agni, Kubera, Varuna, Vayu and other heavenly bodies to take part in the religious festival.

1 Pedda Sesa Vawhanam

Later in the night, the Lord flanked by his two divine consorts – Sridevi and Bhoodevi – takes a pleasure ride on the mighty seven-hooded serpent, the tastefully decorated golden Pedda Sesa Vahanam. The seven hoods represent the seven hills of Lord Venkateswara.

It is believed that it is on this mighty Adishesha that the Lord reclines at his heavenly abode in the Milky Way.

It is in appreciation of his services that the Lord bestowed him the honour of being his first Vahanam during the festival.

2 Chinna Sesa Vahanam

On the second day in the morning the deity is taken around the temple streets on the golden Chinna Sesa Vahanam, also believed to be the serpent Vasuki.

The procession, it is believed, is organised to enlighten devotees on the importance of the hidden Kundalini energy within Man.

3 Hamsa Vahanam

In the night, the Lord is taken out in a procession on the Hamsa (Swan) Vahanam playing the veena. The swan is believed to have an inherent ability to separate milk from water. Likewise, the Lord guides mankind to lead a sanctified life, bestowing on it the wisdom to shed bad qualities and retain noble virtues.

4 Simha Vahanam

On the third day in the morning the Lord steps out of the temple complex on the Simha (Lion) Vahanam. According to mythology the Lord as King Lion is an embodiment of power and speed, a powerful entity born to remove evil spirits and harmful elements and protect the righteous and poor.

5 Mutyapu Pandiri Vahanam

In the night, Lord Malayappa Swamy along with his two consorts ride the Mutyappandiri Vahanam – a pandal shaped carrier decorated with expensive and resplendent milky white pearls – spreading the message of peace, love and co-existence in society.

6 Kalpavriksha Vahanam

On the fourth day in the morning Lord Malayappa, in the company of his divine consorts, rides a golden Kalpavriksha (Tree of boons) Vahanam, bestowing fortunes on his devotees and fulfilling their wishes. Other celestial powers like the divine Kamadhenu and Chintamani form part of the assemblage atop the vahanam.

7 Sarva Bhoopala Vahanam

The night witnesses Lord Malayappa Swamy riding on the Sarva Bhoopala Vahanam spreading the message that all the Dikpalakas (guardians of the eight cardinal directions) governing the Universe are under his direct control and vigilance and that mankind prospers with timely rains.

8 Mohini Avataram

On the fifth day in the morning, the Mohini Avataram is organised, commemorating the Lord's incarnation as Mohini (the



DWAJAROHANAM

celestial beauty).

Dressed in attractive female attire, the Lord (in female disguise) is taken out in a grand procession on an exquisitely decorated ivory palanquin with a golden parrot in her right hand and a long mangala sutra made of gems and diamonds



ANKURARPANAM - SENADHIPATHI



The earliest reference to Brahmotsavam can be traced back to the year 966 CE according to various epigraphic inscriptions

in the other. The Mohini avataram is organised to illustrate the benevolence extended by the Lord to those who follow the path of virtue.

9 Garuda Seva

Considered to be the most auspicious of all the events during the Brahmotsavam, this festival is organised in the night. Several lakhs of devotees from different parts of the country converge to witness the celestial event which on several occasions had concluded in the small hours of the following day.

Adding grandeur to the event,

antique and precious ornaments like the centuries-old *Makara Kanti* and *Lakshmi haaram*, whose history is rooted in temple legends, adorn the deity during the procession.

The deity also wears the sacred garlands from the temple of Goddess Andal in Srivilliputtur. A pair of silk vastrams endowed by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh on behalf of the State government is also presented to the deity.

10 Hanumantha Vahanam

On the sixth day in the morning, Lord Malayappa, donning the role of Lord Rama and equipped with a golden bow and arrow, moves along the temple streets mounted atop the Hanumantha Vahanam. Hanuman is not only considered an ardent devotee of Lord Rama but also an exponent of all the four Vedas, besides being an embodiment of wisdom, strength, success and bravery.

11 Swarna Ratham

The procession of the Golden Chariot is organised in the evening during the twilight hours. Even though the event finds no place in the temple's history, of late it has turned out to be a fascinating procession where only women are allowed to pull the dazzling chariot with the processional deities on it.

12 Gaja Vahanam

Later in the night, Lord Venkateswara enthralled devotees on the Gaja (Elephant) Vahanam. Among other animals engaged in the service of the Lord, the elephant commands a special place, being the celestial vehicle of goddess Mahalakshmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu. To please his consort and bless the devout with all prosperity, the Lord takes a pleasure ride on the Gaja Vahanam.

13 Suryaprabha Vahanam

On the morning of the seventh day, the Lord, equipped with a Vajra kavacham, rides along the thoroughfares of the temple town on the dazzling Suryaprabha Vahanam.

Mythology has it that the Sun God (Lord Surya) is the key architect of the life of humans, animals and plants from whom even powerful luminaries receive luminosity in the cosmos.

It is widely believed that witnessing this vahanam not only provides sustained life but also

relieves one of physical ailments.

14 Chandraprabha Vahanam

The night witnesses the divine procession of the Lord on the elegantly decorated Chandraprabha Vahanam, reminding all of the coolness and brightness of moonlight.

15 Rathotsavam

It is organised on the penultimate day of the festival. At the *subha muhurtham*, the Lord along with his consorts, mounts the gigantic 50-feet-high wooden chariot which is pulled by devotees along the four main streets encircling the holy shrine. The chariot with a golden umbrella tied to its crest is tastefully decorated with flags and festoons.

Religious fervour pervades the town as thousands of devotees take part in the procession and pull the chariot by its bulky rope.

The air remains electrified with the chanting of Govindanamam as the huge chariot moves down the lanes.

16 Aswa Vahanam

As the mega festival marches towards its conclusion the procession of the Aswa (Horse) Vahanam is organised in the night. This signifies the avatara of Kalki – a good Samaritan who fights the evil and protects the virtuous. The message for mankind is clear. Keep away from Kalki dosha and pray the almighty to ward off the impact of wrongdoings.

17 Chakrasnanam

The nine-day Brahmotsavam has a grand finale with Chakrasnanam.

Snapanam (Thirumanjanam) (celestial bath) is performed to the deities on the north-west banks of Swamy Pushkarini (temple tank), followed by the immersion of the idol of Chakratathwar in the tank's waters in the presence of tens of thousands of devotees.

18 Dwajavarohanam

Later in the night, the temple priests, after carrying out certain rituals, ceremonially lower the temple flag, Garudadwaja, hoisted on the first day of the Brahmotsavam, indicating the conclusion of the grand festival.

(The author is Principal Correspondent, The Hindu, Tirumala)



1 PEDDA SESHA VAHANAM



2 CHINNA SESHA VAHANAM



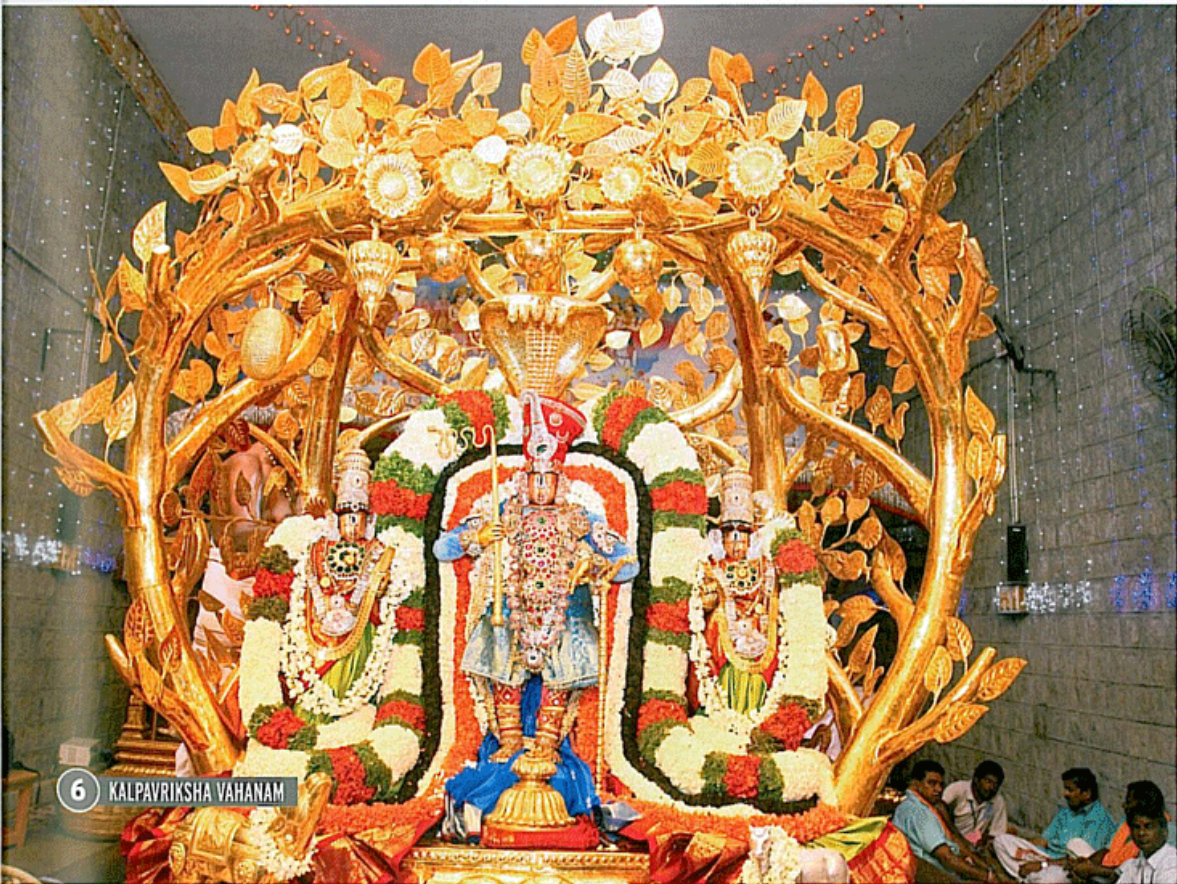
3 HANSA VAHANAM



4 SIMHA VAHANAM



5 MUTYAPU PANDIRI VAHANAM



6 KALPAVRIKSHA VAHANAM



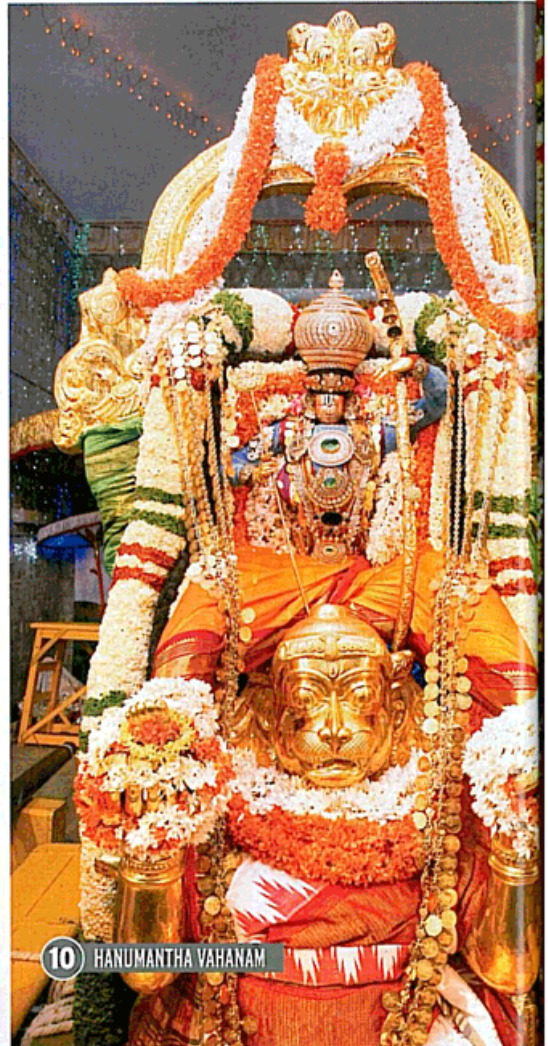
7 SARVA BHOOPALA VAHANAM



8 MOHINI AVATARAM



9 GARUDA SEVA



10 HANUMANTHA VAHANAM



12 GAJA VAHANAM



11 SWARNA RATHAM



13 SURYAPRABHA VAHANAM



14 CHANDRAPRABHA VAHANAM



15 RATHOTSAVAM



16 ASVA VAHANAM



17 CHAKRASNANAM

THE HEAVENLY ABODE OF LORD VENKATESWARA

The first reference about the temple dates back to the 2nd century CE in the Silappathikaram

C. Guruprasad Shukla

Tirumala, the sacred abode of Lord Venkateswara, is one of the most revered Sri Vaishnavite temples in the country.

This ancient temple is located 3,200 feet above mean sea level in the Seshachalam ranges in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. The seven hills that comprise the ranges are believed to represent the seven hoods of Adishesha, the celestial serpent on whom Lord Mahavishnu reclines.

Seshadri, Neeladri, Garudadri, Vrishabhadri, Anjanadri, Narayanadri and Venkatadri are the seven hills.

The temple of Lord Venkateswara is located on the seventh peak, Venkatadri, thus earning it the name, Thiruvengadam. Over the years this has come to be known as Thiru Venkatadri and later on as Tirumala. It is the Lord's primacy over Venkatadri that has earned him the appellation, Venkateswara. The deity is also referred to as Balaji, Govinda, Srinivasa, Vaddi Kasulavada, Sap-

thagirisha and so on.

There is ample literary and epigraphic testimony to the antiquity of the hill temple. The Sastras, Puranas including the Venkatachala Mahatmyam, and Alwar hymns unequivocally declare that in the present Kaliyuga one can attain mukti only by worshipping Lord Venkateswara. According

The presiding deity, Lord Venkateswara, who has millions of devotees all across the globe, has emerged as an epicentre of faith.

to mythology it is widely believed that Lord Mahavishnu directly descended to the Tirumala hills from his heavenly abode of Vaikuntam before his manifestation as the Lord of Seven Hills.

The earliest references to the temple of Lord Venkateswara can be found in Sangam period Tolka-

ppiyam, an ancient Tamil treatise of the second century CE, and in Silappathikaram, written by Ilango Adigal around the same period.

Historically the temple enjoyed the patronage of several kings and emperors of different dynasties and the Nawabs of Arcot, before finally passing into the hands of the East India Company with the advent of the British in the country.

The administration of the shrine was entrusted in 1843 CE to the Mahants of the Hathirani Mutt at Tirumala who administered the temples till the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) Act was enacted in 1933 for better governance. In 1951, the Act of 1933 was replaced by an enactment whereby the administration of TTD was entrusted to a Board of Trustees, and the Executive Officer was appointed by the Government.

The presiding deity, Lord Venkateswara, who has millions of devotees all across the globe has emerged as an epicentre of faith. The sanctum sanctorum which houses the awe-inspiring idol of Lord Venkateswara



The day before the commencement of the Brahmothsavam the commander-in-chief of the army of Lord's domain - Sri Vishwakshena - goes around the thoroughfares of the temple town supervising the arrangements

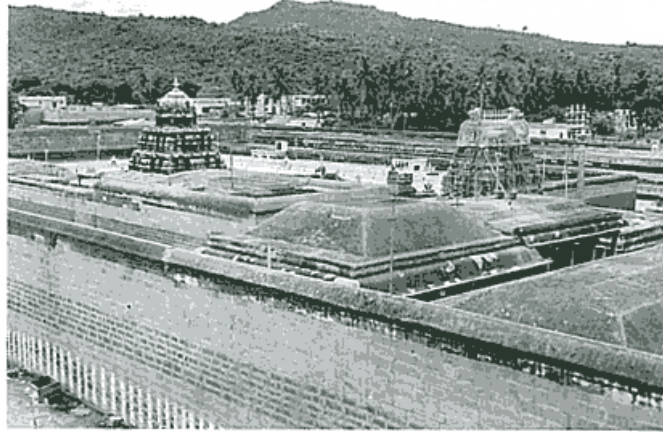
capped with a three-tier golden vimanam (canopy), referred as Ananda Nilayam. The imposing idol of the presiding deity is believed to be self-manifested.

It stands directly beneath the Ananda Nilayam Vimanam. The idol is always draped with diamond-studded golden ornaments. The grandeur of the presiding deity can be estimated from the fact that the stockpile of ornaments used in decorating the idol runs into tonnes. At any given point of time the deity is decorated with no less than two quintals of precious ornaments.

The centuries-old temple is considered to be the richest of all the temples in the country, with its annual income pushing Rs.2,500 crores.

The fact that the temple hundi nets more than Rs.850 crores a year by way of offerings made by visiting devotees in itself corroborates their unflinching faith in the presiding deity. This apart the hundi nets around one tonne of gold and three to four tonnes of silver articles annually.

The temple has landed property worth about Rs.1,00,000 crores in different parts of the State and elsewhere besides gold deposits



An undated picture of the temple complex

of over 4,000 kg with nationalised banks. The temple also has fixed deposits of over Rs. 4,500 crores, earning an income of over Rs.400 crores in the form of interest annually.

The temple, which attracts over 63,000 pilgrims daily on an average has a workforce of over 7,000 regular employees besides 9,000 outsourced staff. Over one-third of the visiting devotees get their

heads tonsured in fulfilment of their prayers.

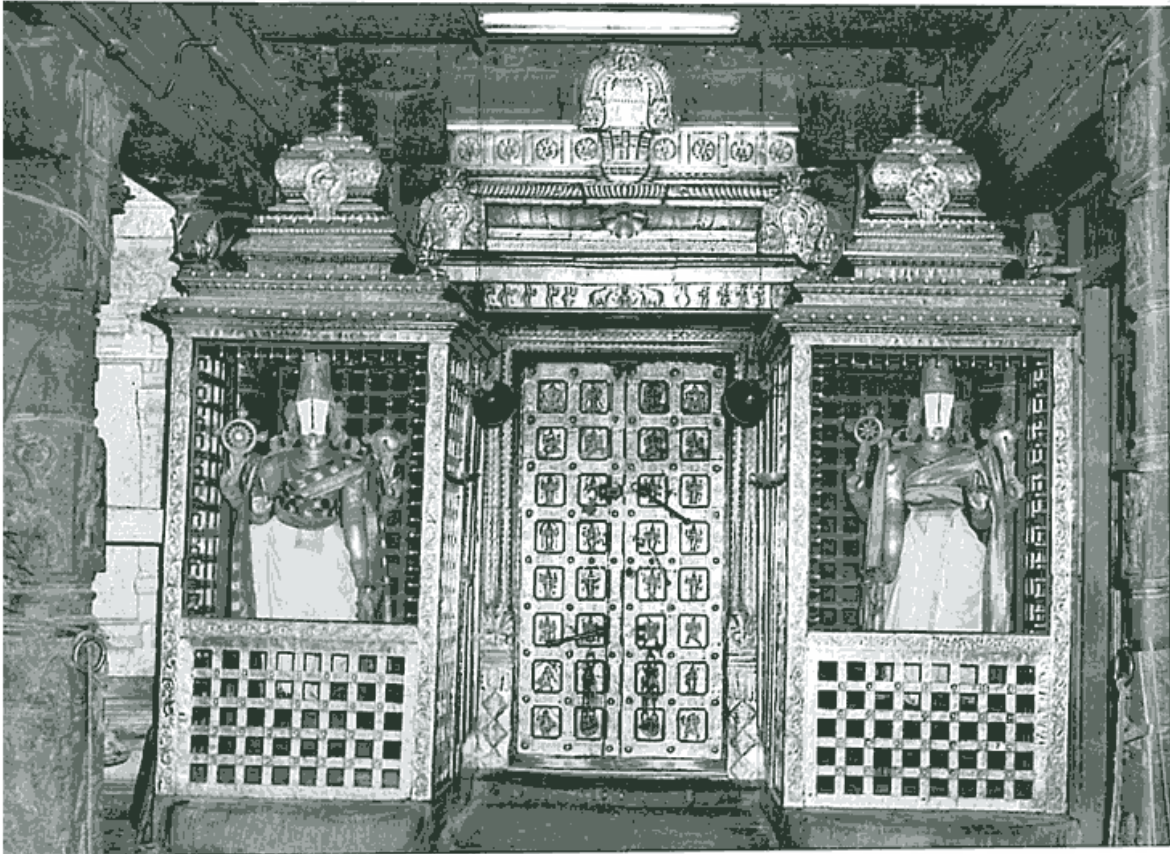
The management of the temple has passed through the hands of several administrators through the ages.

Yet it has flourished, without deviating from the traditions established by the Sri Vaishnavite Saint Ramanujacharya, with strict adherence to the Vaikanasa agama sastras.



Only women are allowed to pull the Swarna Ratham on the sixth night of the Brahmotsavam

A rare picture of the sanctum sanctorum and Bangaru Vakili



A RICH TEMPLE AND ITS EARNINGS

Devotees make valuable offerings in the Lord's *hundi* in return for his blessings

Raghuvir Srinivasan



The Brahmotsavam begins with *dwajaroohanam* when the sacred yellow flag with the imprint of Lord Garuda is ceremonially hoisted atop the *dwajastambam* or flag-post

It is an institution with an annual income pushing Rs.2,500 crore and a surplus of over Rs.650 crore. It has 97 independent divisions and operates around 750 bank accounts. It has a workforce of about 20,000, almost half of them permanent employees. It has its own captive power and water sources and owns land all over the country.

Welcome to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), the official custodian of the hill temple of Lord Venkateswara.

It is the TTD's job to manage all the offerings made to the Lord, who grants an audience to all those who seek it, for a few seconds at a time.

In return for all the hardship they endure on the pilgrimage and the offerings they give Him, the Lord bestows happiness and prosperity on devotees — which is priceless.

There are multiple ways in which devotees give their offerings. The most important of them all is offerings in the temple's

hundi where devotees offer everything from cash and coins to gold, silver, copper and even land deeds. And then there is income from the sale of prasadam, darshan tickets and arjitha seva tickets. Accommodation at Tirumala and rentals from 275 kalyana mandapams across the country, and sale of hair offered by devotees who undergo tonsure at the shrine are other sources. Adding to all these is interest on the large investment corpus that is owned by the TTD.

Just so that we get a measure of the size of the TTD, if it were a listed company, it will rank around 300 in the list of over 5,000 companies on the Bombay Stock Exchange in terms of income (turnover). It will overshadow the likes of Indian Hotels Company, which owns the Taj Group of hotels, Tata Global Beverages (formerly Tata Tea), Sundaram Finance and multinationals such as Novartis and Pfizer.

Interestingly, in terms of surplus (net profit), the TTD will rank around 100 in the list scoring over well-known companies such as

Tata Motors, Ashok Leyland, TVS Motor and some banks including IOB and Karur Vysya Bank. And all this with just a single, of course, priceless asset!

Hundi offerings

The offerings by devotees in the *hundi* is segregated in the *parakamani*, which is located within the temple's inner courtyard, right behind the sanctum sanctorum. Here, regular staff and professional bankers who act as volunteers segregate the cash, gold, silver and precious stones offered in the *hundi*.

"Every speck of dust deposited in the *hundi* is accounted for and can be traced till its actual utilisation," says a top official of the TTD. The dust in the *hundi* is weighed and handed over to the jewellery section to extract any gold or silver particles that may be present.

Cash

Devotees offer rupees as well as foreign currencies and coins. The local currency and coins are converted into fixed deposits by banks

staff present in the *parakamani*. Here it is State Bank of India and Andhra Bank.

These cash proceeds flow into the corpus of the TTD as per the provisions of the Andhra Pradesh Charitable and Hindu Religious Institutions and Endowments Act, 1987.

These are treated as capital receipts and are not used for revenue expenses in running the temple and the TTD. The latter is financed by interest earned on bank deposits. The interest rate on these deposits is based on periodic tenders called for by the TTD with the highest bidder landing the cash. The most recent deposits were made at an interest rate ranging from 10 to 10.20 per cent. There is stiff competition among public sector banks for TTD's deposits.

The *hundi* at Tirumala received around Rs.885 crore as per the revised estimates for 2012-13. This is an average of Rs.2.5 crore a day.

The coins add up to around Rs.2.5 crore a month while foreign currency notes account for about Rs.1.5 crore a month. Soiled notes offered add up to Rs.1 crore a month on an average.

The foreign coins are not converted as most times the staff are unable to identify the country. These are stored in the TTD's treasury and now have grown to about 45 tonnes in weight. The treasury department undertook the task of separating antique coins recently and they are estimated at around 800 kg. The TTD is examining the possibility of auctioning the remaining foreign

The hundi at Tirumala earned around Rs.885 crore as per the revised estimates for 2012-13, which is an average of Rs.2.5 crore a day.

coins using the services of MSTC Ltd., a public sector company. The proceeds from this auction will be used to purchase gold to ensure that the money is capitalised.

Gold

Every month, on an average, devotees offer 100 kg of gold in the *hundi* as ornaments, bars, coins, *mangalasutras* and even broken pieces.

These are segregated at the *parakamani* from where banks directly take charge of the gold. It is the responsibility of the banks to transport, melt, refine and assay the gold, after which they convert them into deposit certificates favouring the TTD.

The expenses, including insurance, are borne by the banks which are selected on the basis of competitive quotations. These gold deposits now earn 1.6 per cent interest, which is again calculated in gold terms and reinvested when deposits mature. These deposits are typically for 3, 5 and 7 year terms. State Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank and Corporation Bank are the three main banks that now handle TTD's gold deposits.

Till recently, interest was calculated in gold terms but converted into cash and credited to the

TTD's account which used it for expenditure. But the practice was changed recently in order to capitalise on the asset value. Between 1.2 to 1.4 tonnes of gold deposits are made by the TTD annually. The deposit scheme was started about five years ago.

Until then, the TTD would transport the gold on its own to the mint in Mumbai where it was converted into pendants, bars and *mangalasutras* which were sold to devotees. The objective is to multiply the value of the asset by adding to it rather than selling it and raising cash.

A back-of-the-envelope calculation would show that the TTD now probably has gold reserves of between 6 to 8 tonnes in the form of deposit certificates, all of it generated in the last five years.

Silver

The total silver stock of around 20 tonnes with the TTD is proposed to be auctioned through MSTC shortly. The proceeds will be re-invested in gold to keep the capital offering intact.

A top official of the TTD feels that banks should offer silver deposit schemes, *a la* the gold deposit schemes that they now run. Alternatively, they could take the silver from the TTD, exchange it with MMTC for gold and then give gold deposit certificates. They are unwilling to do either now, forcing the TTD to auction the silver much against its wishes.

Hair auction


The hair generated from tonsures at Tirumala is auctioned



The Garuda vahanam, on the fifth night of the utsavam, is considered most auspicious and the crowd of devotees is highest on this day

An undated file picture of the Parakamani





through MSTC. The auctions, done around three to four times a year, generated around Rs.200 crore in 2012-13. The buyers are understood to be agents for foreign purchasers and the TTD has discovered that the value of certain types of long locks, especially those of women, has a high value in the international market. The hair is used for making wigs and for transplantation.

The TTD is understood to be researching the uses to which the hair is put and the price that it fetches in the international market so that at some later stage it can directly enter the chain and maximise revenues.

Prasadam

Sale of laddus and other prasadam generated about Rs.140

crore last year, while darshan ticket sales brought in about Rs.180 crore.

Rent from the various kalyana mandapams across the country and cottages in Tirumala added up to Rs. 90 crore, while Arjitha Seva tickets generated around Rs.45 crore.

Fixed deposits yielded around Rs.500 crore. Miscellaneous receipts from sale of publications, toll-gate fees etc., added up to Rs.94 crore. All these receipts were used to finance the day-to-day running of the temple, staff salaries and other expenses apart from funding the various social schemes run by the TTD and associated trusts.

Year	Receipts (Rs.)
1753-54	92,000
1754-55	58,841
1755-56	53,235
1756-57	51,240
1757-58	50,866

DATA NOT AVAILABLE FOR INTERVENING YEARS

1823-24	1,77,024
1824-25	2,27,976
1825-26	1,83,933
1826-27	1,92,258
1827-28	1,93,888
1828-29	1,87,504
1829-30	1,90,567
1830-31	1,91,371
1831-32	1,41,863
1832-33	1,37,021

DATA NOT AVAILABLE FOR INTERVENING YEARS

1953-54 (Nov-Jun)	14,68,184
1954-55	20,70,358
1955-56	21,68,952
1956-57	27,20,389
1957-58	33,48,344
1958-59	41,84,747
1959-60	52,49,940
1960-61	64,39,975
1961-62	80,99,662
1962-63	98,87,130
1963-64 (Jun-Oct)	35,68,298

TTD'S REVENUE OVER THE YEARS

AN INTERESTING SET OF HISTORICAL DATA EXTRACTED FROM AMRITOTSAVAM, A TTD PUBLICATION



DATA NOT AVAILABLE FOR INTERVENING YEARS

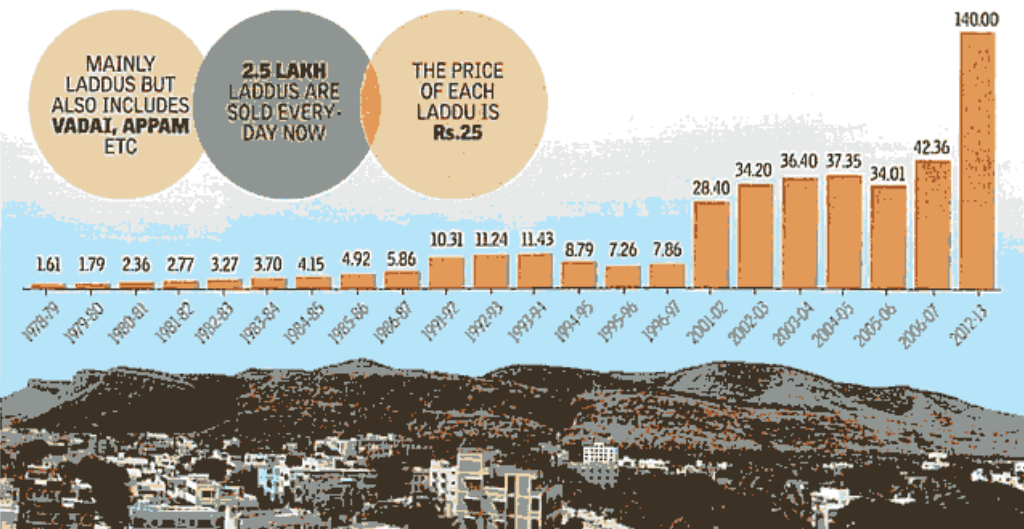
Year	Receipts (Rs. in cr)
1966-67	5.72
1967-68	3.76
1970-71	8.78
1971-72	10.15
1972-73	9.15
1974-75	4.41
1975-76	6.41
1977-78	8.16
1978-79	12.84
1979-80	15.30
1980-81	18.93
1981-82	22.52
1982-83	29.86
1983-84	32.92
1984-85	36.00
1985-86	43.23
1986-87	43.56
1991-92	89.55
1992-93	103.95
1993-94	121.57
1994-95	147.82
1995-96	173.25
1996-97	194.74

DATA NOT AVAILABLE FOR INTERVENING YEARS

2002-03	467.32
2003-04	496.1
2004-05	586.59
2005-06	673.56
2006-07	756.16
2012-13	2125.00

FAMOUS PRASADAM

(Sales in Rs. Crores)



Every speck of dust in the Hundi is accounted for

SYSTEMS THAT WILL MAKE A CORPORATE PROUD

TTD has an excellent system of checks and balances to account for the Lord's income and assets

Raghuvir Srinivasan

From the relatively small but hard-earned contributions of the less affluent to the bonanzas from the rich, every offering to the Lord is made in good faith by His devotees. The belief is that their offerings will help the Lord repay His massive debt to Kubera. In return He will bestow blessings on them.

Given this, it is absolutely important that the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which manages the Sri Venkateswara temple, has foolproof systems of accounting and audit. The TTD holds and manages the money, gold and other valuables offered by devotees to the Lord in trust on His behalf and is duty-bound to use it for their common good even while ensuring that His assets continue to grow. You only have to meet and talk to TTD officials, to understand that they are sincere in the pursuit of this goal.

Forty-six-year old O. Balaji, Additional Financial Adviser and Chief Accounts Officer, is the man



spearheading the process of upgrading the financial and accounting systems of TTD.

When Mr. Balaji, a chartered accountant, joined it in 2003, TTD had finalised its accounts only up to 1999. Today, accounts are up-to-date until the June quarter of this year and you can know with a click of the mouse the Lord's

receipts, payments and surplus. In other words, much like a corporate, the TTD takes stock of its "performance" on a monthly basis. And these accounts are subject to internal audit by professional chartered accountancy firms and statutory audit by the government auditor.

Budgeting system

Not just that. There are complete systems in place to account for receipts to the paisa, and to screen every payment that is made. There is a budgeting system in place across the organisation whereby all departments present their requirements. These are deliberated with the respective heads before budget estimates are prepared.

The budgeting process itself begins by breaking up the broad objectives of the TTD into detailed work plans for each programme and sub-programme. These are further broken down into activities and projects for each department. Incidentally, Section 116 of the Andhra Pradesh Charitable,



Garlands from Goddess Andal of Srivilliputhur and sacred ornaments such as the makara kanti and lakshmi haaram adorn the deity on Garuda Seva day

Hindu Religious Institutions & Endowments Act 1987 requires the TTD to place before the Board a budget showing the probable receipts and expenditure every year. Every item of expense is compared with the budget and then goes for a pre-audit where it is cleared.

Capital and revenue

Capital and revenue payments as well as receipts are clearly separated as in any company. Thus, all receipts into the temple hundi are considered as capital receipt that either goes into the corpus straightaway or used for capital expenditure in the creation of assets such as buildings, equipment and vehicles.

Receipts from darshan tickets, seva tickets, hair sales, prasadam sales and rent from accommodation at Tirumala and 275 kalyana mandapams that the TTD owns across the country is considered as revenue receipt and used for revenue expenditure such as staff salaries – which add up to Rs.25 crore a month – maintenance, fuel, power and so on.

TTD maintains around 750 bank accounts in addition to accounts of 16 allied trusts. Earlier the accounts of the 97 units or departments were maintained independently.

But they have all been centralised enabling better control. The entire accounting is now done with the assistance of nine chartered accountancy firms, and the process is overseen by another set of nine accounting firms for internal control purposes. The TTD has retained a Big Four consultancy firm to advise it on TDS (tax deduction at source) compliance issues.

However, the TTD is now in the process of creating an in-house accounting cadre consisting of chartered accountants. A proposal has been submitted to the government. TTD's accounts are subject to internal audit by professional chartered accountancy firms and the report is reviewed by an Internal Audit Committee headed by the Executive Officer. The statutory audit is carried out by the State Audit Department. The audit for 2011-12 is in progress.

About 90 per cent of the TTD's annual payments (approx. Rs.1,300 crore last year) is being made electronically without using cheques, something that even a company can be proud of. The TTD has more ambitious plans to make its systems contemporary. Topping the wish-list is a proposal

TTD's accounts are up-to-date till the June quarter of this year and you can know the latest financial position with a click of the mouse

to implement an ERP (enterprise resource planning) platform to integrate the flow of transactions from operations to accounting, real-time. There are also plans for a Costing Department that will go into various aspects of costs so that informed spending decisions can be made.

Control and verification of assets

Control and verification is a critical function of the Finance Department at the TTD which has a sizeable collection of gold and silver jewellery and precious stones in its various temples. There is a separate Inventory Section which maintains records of the Thiruvabharanam and undertakes physical verification of the jewellery.

Such verification is carried out yearly by a team of senior officers. This is not just at the Sri Venkateswara temple in Tirumala but across all the 46 temples that come under the TTD's fold, from Rishikesh to Kanyakumari.

These verifications take six to eight months to be completed in all the temples and are a continuous process. The visit of the verification team is intimated to the temple concerned just a day in advance, to maintain the surprise element. The TTD is now planning a physical verification of all its fixed assets through independent chartered accountancy firms.

The decades-old Thiruvabharanam Registers are in poor shape. These are being scanned and the pages being laminated in order to preserve them. The new Thiruvabharanam Registers are being written in non-tearable paper.

Parakamani process

The offerings in the hundi are segregated in the parakamani. A jewellery appraiser in the parakamani segregates the gold items every day and they are sent to the Treasury in the TTD's Tirupati office for safekeeping at the end of the month. The entire process of parakamani, done by staff and volunteers from banks, is conducted under camera surveillance, with the recordings preserved for verification. The Treasury in Tirupati

maintains a record of the gold and jewellery sent by the parakamani in the Bagarkimath (literally, priceless) Register.

These are re-verified physically once a month by the Treasury appraiser in the presence of senior officials. These are then weighed and put in sealed bags and stored in lockers. The entire process is recorded on camera. The weighing scales are verified by the Weights and Measures Department of the government.

A committee headed by a retired judge, Justice Jagannada Rao, which went into the process of safeguarding the jewellery and other valuables in 2010, observed: "On a review of the procedures, systems and registers maintained by the TTD at the Bokkasam and Parakamani at Tirumala, Parakamani (Coins) and Treasury at Tirupati, and Sri Padmavathi Ammavari Temple, Tiruchanoor, the Commission is of the opinion that excellent procedures, systems and registers are being maintained in accordance with the rules and the Manual, which perhaps are not found in any other temple in the country." Plans are afoot to build an underground vault with state-of-the-art security systems to store the treasures.

Investment Committee

As a matter of best practice, the TTD has an Investment Committee. A professional body comprising outside experts, it oversees investment activities. A former Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, a former Securities and Exchange Board of India head, a retired banker and former Chief Vigilance Commissioner, a former Director of IDBI and a Director of ONGC are the members of this committee, which meets once a quarter and assesses the investments made by the TTD. The committee reports directly to the TTD Board and Executive Officer. The members perform this job on an honorary basis and officials say that some of them do not even accept travel fares and accommodation.

Credit has to go in equal measure to the past and present Executive Officers and Joint Executive Officers of the TTD and other officials for putting in place such excellent systems of checks and balances to ensure that every paisa offered by devotees to the Lord goes to Him and is accounted for fully.

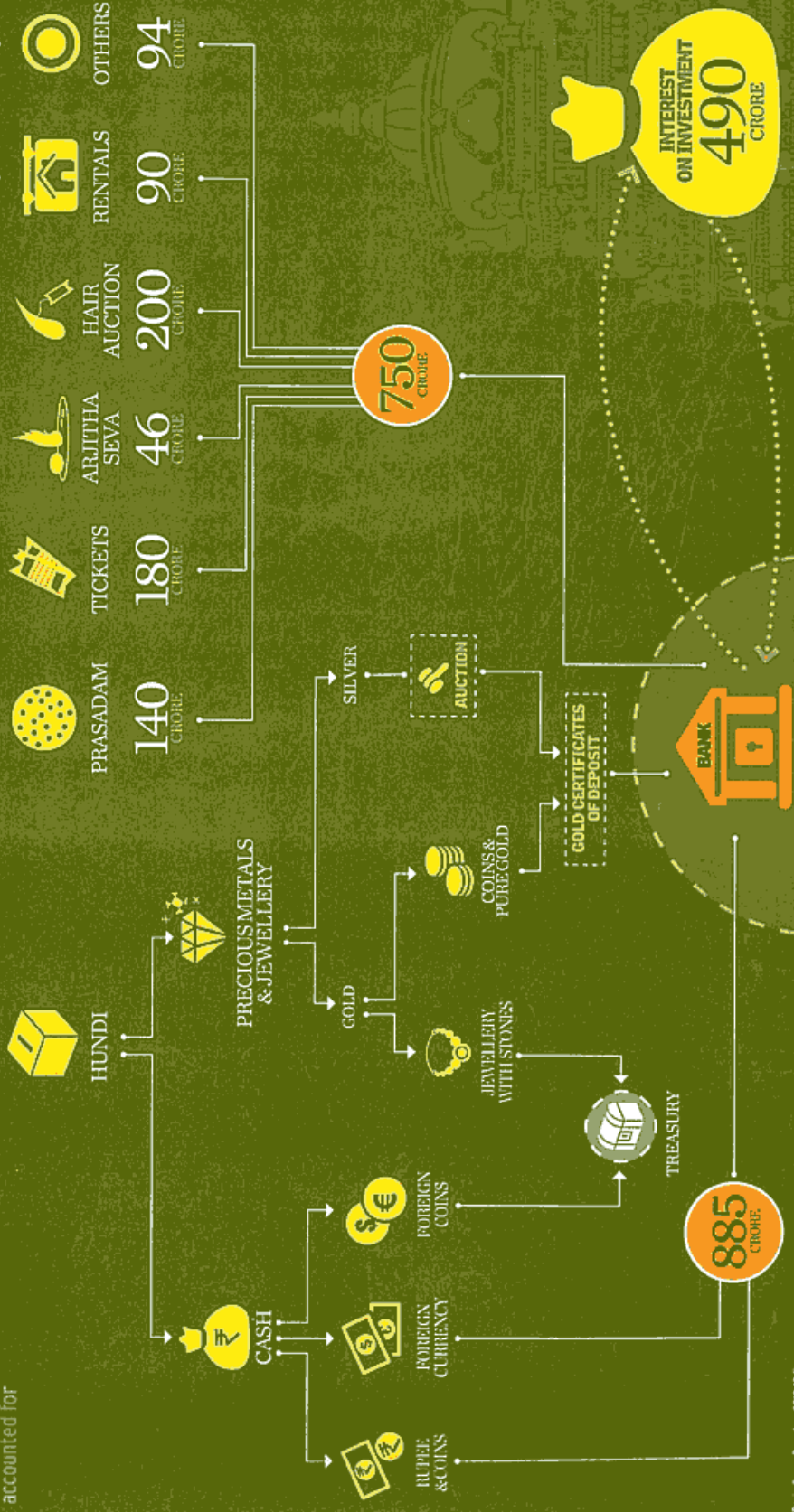
(The author is Business Editor, The Hindu)



A pair of silk vastrams on behalf of the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh is presented to the deity on Garuda Seva day

SEVEN HILLS OF WEALTH

What devotees offer and how it is accounted for



Rs. in Crore. Based on 2012-13 figures

OH YES! IT'S THE TIRUPATI LADDU

A staggering number of 2.5 lakh laddus are produced and distributed every day, but demand is insatiable

C. Guruprasad Shukla

After undertaking darshan of Lord Venkateswara and securing His blessings, the most important item on the agenda of any pilgrim to Tirumala is buying laddus. The very reference to the hill temple reminds one of the famous laddu known for its unique flavour, characteristics and uncompromising quality standards.



Seshadri, Neeladri, Garudadri, Vrishabhadri, Anjanadri, Narayanadri and Venkatadri are the seven hills on which the sacred Tirumala shrine is located

With rich ingredients such as cardamom, cashew nuts, saffron, pure ghee, and high quality raisins, the laddu has earned for itself a distinctive place in the history of the hill temple. A staggering number of 2.5 lakh laddus are produced inside the hill temple on an average every day and sold to devotees. The production crosses the three lakh mark during weekends; on festive occasions and during the annual Brahmotsavam it is even higher.

With the insatiable demand for the laddus from pilgrims the TTD was forced not only to embark on an extensive modernisation pro-

gramme of its temple kitchen but also set up an additional *potu* adjacent to the *Padi potu* under the supervision of the managers of the erstwhile Mirasidars. The abolition of the Mirasidar system in 1996 scripted a new chapter in the temple's history.

The modernisation process of the *potu* began after 1984 and the kitchens were mechanised in a phased manner.

While batter making machines made their way into the *Padi potu* in 1990, wet grinders, and granite tables followed suit in 1991 and finally it was in 1992 that the conventional firewood ovens were replaced by gas ovens.

The temple administration further embarked on an intensified modernisation programme by setting up a 20,000 litre ghee tank outside the main temple complex. Keeping in view the safety of the ancient temple structure, the *boondi* - making process was also shifted outside the temple in 2008 and a conveyor system was set up for the transportation of the refined *boondi* into the tem-

ple complex for the making of the laddu.

Once the laddus are manually shaped by the *potu* Brahmins, the mouth-watering sweet balls (each weighing about 175 grams) are lifted back to the laddu selling counters located outside the temple through the same conveyor system.

The system not only drastically reduced the time taken in the transportation of laddus to the counters situated outside the temple but also proved a boon to visiting devotees as they were relieved of criss-crossing traffic by the laddu-carrying staff at the temple Mahadwaram.

Besides, the TTD has also set up a modern flour mill with a capacity to grind over 1,000 kg of Bengal gram (the main ingredient in the making of the laddus) besides a state-of-the-art food analysis laboratory to monitor the quality of the laddu as well as other prasadam prepared inside the temple kitchen.

The chain of programmes to refashion the temple kitchen

(*potu*) has helped increase laddu production from a mere 20,000 a day during the 1990s to over three lakh at present.

The temple also earns over Rs.140 crore annually through the sale of laddus.

Further, the Tirumala laddu was also granted Geographical Indication (GI) patent rights in 2009 thanks to the efforts of the then Executive Officer, K V Ramanachary thus forbidding others from naming or marketing the sacred prasadam under the same name.

Potu

The temple kitchen is also referred to as *Srivari potu* – a place where the prasadams offered to the presiding deity as *Naivedhyam* are prepared.

Unlike other temples the Tirumala temple has two core *potus* – *Inner potu* and *Padi potu*.

While the *Inner potu* is situated



inside the *Vimana Prakaram*, the *Padi potu*, which came into existence with the demand in time, is located at the *Sampangi prakaram* inside the temple complex.

All varieties of *anna prasadams* like *chakrapongal*, *pulihora*, *pongal*, *kadambham* and *daddojanam* offered as daily *Naivedhyams* to the presiding deity are prepared at the *Inner potu*.

The striking feature of this *potu* is that even today the *anna prasadams* offered to the presiding deity as *Naivedhyam* are prepared on conventional firewood ovens strictly in accordance with tradition despite the fact that the temple management has gone in for a large scale modernisation of its kitchens during the past couple of decades.

Meanwhile the preparations made at the *Padi potu* are called *Panyarams* which include the *laddu*, *vada*, *dosa*, *appam*, *jelebi*, *muruku*, and *poli*.

Over 550 employees including 130 employed by private contractors toil round-the-clock to meet the daily requirements of the pilgrims as well as the temple. The fact that the temple kitchen remains open for more than 19 hours a day speaks volumes about the scale and nature of the work load.



The hallowed temple of Lord Venkateswara is located on the seventh peak, Venkatadri, thus earning it the name, Thiruvengadam

Laddu being produced in the temple Potu



THE SEVEN HILLS ARE A GEOLOGICAL MARVEL

The hills date back to 2,100 million years and were probably under water for a long period of time

A . D . R a n g a r a j a n

The Tirumala hills that are part of the Seshachalam ranges are considered a marvel in more ways than one. The hills, which figure in Hindu mythological texts, resonate with divine vibes. The hills have an interesting geological history.

Tirumala has rich biodiversity. Some of the endemic flora and fauna are in the list of endangered species. Situated at the tail-end of the Seshachalam ranges, the Tirumala hills form the southernmost part of the Kadapa basin.

Mythologically, the Seshachalam (Hill of the Serpent) is considered the manifestation of Adishesha, the serpent-bed on which Lord Mahavishnu reclines. The mythical story goes that the serpent descended on the Earth and took the shape of the mighty hills on the instruction of his Master ahead of His incarnation as Lord Venkateswara here.

The upper portion of the Seshachalam ranges situated in the Ahobilam-Srisailem area is con-

sidered the serpent's hood, with the tail being Tirumala-Tirupati.

A red patch/band on the southern face of the hills is visible from a distance of 20 km. This quartzite patch distinguishes Tirumala from the scores of other hillocks around it.

The vertical face of the escarpment is made up of Bairemconda Quartzite.



Quartzite wonder

The presence of quartzite in the form of a vertical hill itself is a wonder. The quartzite gently dipping northwards is exposed as vertical cliffs forming an escarpment

to the south.

The quartzite is seen as a brownish red horizontal band on the top portion of the hills and is devoid of vegetation. It is resistant to weathering and it is 90-95 per cent quartz.

The escarpment has an east-west trend and the line of unconformable junction (at the base portion) slopes gently from a height of 1,027 metres at Tirumala at the western point to about 150 metres at the eastern end, within a horizontal distance of 10 km.

Eparchaeon Unconformity

An interesting aspect that confounds even renowned scientists is the Eparchaeon Unconformity, considered a magnificent feature among crystalline (archaeon) structures in the world. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has declared it a National Geological Monument.

The scientific explanation for this goes like this. The deposition of rocks did not take place in this portion for 500 million years, which is called the 'Period



The earliest references to the temple of Lord Venkateswara can be found in Sangam period literature dating back to the 2nd century CE

of non-deposition'. It is marked by a thin film of conglomerate. The slopes are composed of granite and gneiss with the intrusion of dolerite dykes. Technically, 1,600 million year-old rocks are resting on the Archaean rocks which are more than 2,100 million years old, consisting of granite, gneiss and dolerite dykes. The boundary between the two ancient rock groups, denoting the enormous time gap of 500 million years in the evolution of the earth's crust, is called the Eparchaeon Unconformity in Indian geology.

This is said to be because of the action or inaction of temperature and pressure, the main agents for sedimentation, during this period. During this time gap, the granite formed the landmass and underwent denudation. There was then inundation by the sea, followed by deposition of Kadapa sedimentary rocks.

The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has installed signboards near the final 'U' turn on the ghat road leading to the Tirumala hills, from where one can have a panoramic view of the Bairemkonda Quartzite resting on the uneven surface of the underlying granite and gneiss. The feature highlights

An interesting aspect that confounds even renowned scientists is the Eparchaeon Unconformity, considered a magnificent feature among crystalline (archaeon) structures in the world.

the enormity of the time gap of 500 million years that separates the two rock formations.

Natural rock arch

The 'Natural Bridge' or 'Natural rock arch' (*Sila Thoranam* in Telugu) is another wonder that has been declared by the GSI as a National Geological Monument. According to mythology, Lord Venkateswara passed through this arch when he stepped on Tirumala, on arrival from His celestial abode.

Situated a kilometre west of the Sri Venkateswara temple, it is a naturally-formed structure where two rock groups precariously hang in the air with each other's support, forming an arch. A portion of the quartzite is left unsupported over a width of about 10 metres.

Technically, the bridge is called as 'wind gap', as the gap below the arch is believed to have been formed by wind erosion aided by the action of water.

The mention of water at such an altitude will bring in many doubts, but the scientific fact is that Tirumala was completely under water several million years ago. The ripple marks present on the quartzite rocks bears testimony to it. This area is home to the golden gecko, one of the most endangered creatures in the hills. The reptile looks just like a garden lizard, but with a heavy golden brown tinge.

Karakambadi fault

Karakambadi fault is another geological phenomenon that can be witnessed at Karakambadi village situated 15 km east of Tirupati. It is a result of a small jerky movement under the earth's crust that caused a displacement of the rocks. On keen observation, one can see a partly-cut rocky structure. The hill range appears to have been chopped in the middle and continues again at a different place.



The hundi at the temple earned Rs.885 crore in 2012-13

(The author is Principal Correspondent, *The Hindu*, Tirupati)

Sila Thoranam at Tirumala



NOBODY RETURNS HUNGRY AFTER THE LORD'S DARSHAN

The Nithya Annadanam scheme serves meals to 60,000 pilgrims daily - for free

Raghuvir Srinivasan

The first thing that strikes you as you enter the massive kitchen of the Nitya Annadanam complex is how organised and clean it is. Not a mean feat at all if you consider that the kitchen cooks for an average of 60,000 people daily. The kitchen has its own flour mill and a section for wet-grinding with a score of large grinders lined up against the wall, all of them busy churning out chutney.

Lined up along the main hall of the kitchen is a row of large rice boilers, about three feet in height and three feet in diameter, bubbling with boiling rice. Along the opposite wall sambar is sizzling in similar large boilers. Cooks are busy transferring drumstick pieces from large stainless steel trolleys into the boiling sambar.

Gigantic scale

Everything about this kitchen, the vessels, the trolleys, the containers and the food, is gigantic in scale. And it is so with a rea-

son. The main Mathrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba Annaprasada Complex (MTV) opens at 9.30 am and serves food continuously till 11.30 pm with a one hour break at 4.30 for maintenance.

"While on weekdays we serve 50,000 to 60,000 pilgrims, on weekends it goes to 70,000 and above," says S. Venugopal, Deputy Executive Officer, Annadanam Department, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

He reckons that during the Brahmotsavam there is a floating pilgrim population of about 1,00,000 daily, which doubles on Garuda Seva day. A majority of these pilgrims eat at the Annadanam complex.

The MTV complex has four big halls lined with stainless steel tables and benches. Each of these halls can accommodate 1,000 pilgrims at a time.

One of these halls serves rotis and dhal for the sake of pilgrims from North India in buffet style. The other three halls serve south Indian meals: unlimited servings of rice of excellent quality, sam-

bar, rasam, curry, chutney and a sweet dish, usually chakkara pongal or kalkandu bath.

What is also striking is the orderly manner in which pilgrims are ushered into the complex in a queue system, and the cleanliness and hygiene in the eating area. After every batch of pilgrims finishes its meals, the hall is closed for cleaning.

The food is served hot and is tasty, as this writer personally experienced.

Apart from the main complex, free meals are served in another building a couple of blocks away called the Pilgrim Amenities Complex II.

Here about 3,000 to 4,000 pilgrims are served on average daily. Food from the main kitchen in the MTV complex is brought here.

The Annadanam department serves milk, coffee and tea in addition to uppuma, sambar bath and curd bath to pilgrims waiting for darshan in the Vaikuntam queue complex.

Mr. Venugopal estimates that



Coins offered in the hundi alone add up to Rs.2.5 crore a month

15,000 to 20,000 pilgrims waiting in about 31 compartments are served on average every day, and this goes up to about 30,000 on holidays and at weekends. This is round-the-clock.

Free meals are also served in the Tiruchanur temple of Goddess Padmavathi where 3,500 pilgrims eat daily.

For the benefit of pilgrims trekking on the footpath, the Annadanam department serves about 5,000 packets of sambar rice and curd rice daily.

Earnings from corpus

The scale of the free meals scheme, which started in a small way serving 2,000 pilgrims a day in 1985, has reached massive proportions. The scheme is financed out of the interest proceeds from the corpus of the Sri Venkateswara Nithya Annadanam Trust. The corpus of this trust, entirely made up of donations from devotees, had Rs. 405 crore to its credit as of March 31, 2013. According to Mr. Venugopal, it has subsequently grown to Rs.436 crore.

Everything about this kitchen, the vessels, the trolleys, the containers and the food is gigantic in scale. And it is so with a reason.

The money is in fixed deposits of nationalised banks with only the interest used for expenses. The trust attracts about Rs.3-4 crore of donations every month. The annual expenditure on the scheme is estimated at Rs.50 crore. Given the rising number of pilgrims being served and the extension of the scheme to different locations, the Nithya Annadanam Trust had a deficit of Rs.3 crore last year. The TTD meets this deficit from its general expenses.

On average, about 8,000 kg of rice and 3 tonnes of vegetables are consumed daily.

The latter come as donations. There are nine donors from Chennai, Bangalore, Mysore, Tirupur, Vellore, Madanapalle and Chikkaballapur (Karnataka) who fully meet the vegetable needs. "You only have to tell them your requirement and they will send it," beams Mr. Venugopal.

The MTV building where the main annadanam is done cost Rs.25 crore to build in 2011 and was financed fully by a donor; the equipment and vessels costing



The scale of the free meals scheme, which started in a small way serving 2,000 pilgrims a day in 1985, has reached massive proportions

Rs.5 crore were donated by another devotee.

A mix of permanent and contract workers are involved. About 200 Srivari sevaks or volunteers help cut vegetables and serve food.

Donations for the Annadanam Trust are subject to a minimum of Rs.1000; those donating Rs.1 lakh and above are entitled to special privileges for darshan and accommodation at Tirumala.



Foreign currency notes in the hundi add up to Rs. 1.5 crore a month



TIRUMALA'S MOST POPULAR VOW

Segregating and auctioning hair from the tonsure of pilgrims is a major process

Raghuvir Srinivasan

Tonsuring the head is one of the most popular vows at the Sri Venkateswara temple. When faced with troubles or to thank Him for answering their prayers, devotees routinely offer the hair on their head to the Lord. Indeed, along with buying the laddu, head tonsure is one of the most important items on the agenda of many pilgrims visiting the hill shrine. Tonsuring of new-borns is also a very popular vow at Tirumala. Devotees typically bring their infants before the first year is complete or when they are about to turn one to tonsure their heads and pierce their ears.

To enable pilgrims to keep their vow, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has a massive establishment called kalyanakatta where it employs a large number of barbers. On average, 30,000 tonsures are carried out in the various kalyanakattas operated by the TTD. As of date about 610 barbers, including temporary ones, are employed by the TTD

at its kalyanakatta that functions out of different locations in Tirumala. Barbers earn an average of Rs.25,000 to 30,000 a month. In addition, there are Srivari Sevaks or volunteers adding up to a few hundreds who help manage the rush of pilgrims waiting to get their heads tonsured.

Prior to 1946, the TTD had no control over the members of the kalyanakatta sangham. It used to get 25 per cent of the income from tonsuring, including ticket cost and sale of hair, while the sangham got 75 per cent. In 1946, TTD took over the sangham and its activities.

The number of devotees offering tonsure has been steadily rising over the years. Ten years ago, 71 lakh pilgrims tonsured their head. Last year, that is 2012, as many as 1.15 crore pilgrims offered the tonsure vow at Tirumala.

Besides the main sprawling complex a stone's throw from the temple, the TTD operates kalyanakattas in 18 other locations in Tirumala, mainly in the many guest houses that are spread over the hill town. In addition, there is also a kalyanakatta each at Tirupati and Tiruchanoor.

Services are offered free of cost in the main complex which functions round the clock, while in the guest-houses a token fee of Rs.10 is charged from pilgrims. Part of this fee goes towards the cost of the blade; the TTD does not reuse blades for health and hygiene reasons.

The hair offered by devotees is collected, segregated in the main complex and stored to be eventually auctioned. The segregation is based on the length of the hair. For instance, hair length of 31 inches and above is top category followed by between 18 and 31 inches and so on.

The TTD earns about Rs.200 crore per annum from hair auctions done through MSTC Ltd., a public sector company. The hair



TTD earns about Rs.200 crore from auctioning human hair





is typically bought by wigmakers and is also used for surgical transplant purposes. The TTD is now researching into the market abroad for the hair as it feels that it can derive more value if it is able to sell the hair directly to end users abroad.

In 2012-13, the kalyanakatta earned Rs.2.36 crore from just sale of Rs.10 tickets for tonsuring and in the April-August period of this year, it has already earned Rs.1.69 crore. The number of devotees offering tonsure has been steadily rising over the years. Ten years ago, 71 lakh pilgrims tonsured their head and this went up to 94 lakh in 2008. Last year, that is 2012, as many as 1.15 crore pilgrims offered the tonsure vow at Tirumala.

Ear piercing

A lot of devotees get the ears of their infant children pierced within the first year of their birth at Tirumala, along with a tonsure. There is a separate ear piercing sangham that operates in the hill town under the auspices of the TTD. The growing popularity of this practice will be evident from the earnings from ear piercing.



Prasadam sales, mainly laddu, fetch Rs.140 crore a year



From about Rs.4.26 lakhs ten years ago in 2003, earnings from ear-piercing rose to about Rs.21 lakhs in 2012. In the April-August period of this year, the TTD has already earned Rs.9.50 lakhs from

ear-piercing. The staff who do the ear-piercing earn about Rs.10,000 a month as salary while pilgrims are charged Rs.50; this doubles to Rs.100 if the piercing is done in the cottages.

KEEPING TIRUMALA SAFE AND SECURE

Maintaining security in a small town with a floating population of 1 lakh at any given time is not easy

Raghuvir Srinivasan

A small town situated on a hill. Between 80,000 and 1,00,000 people are present in this 10.33 sq mile area at any given point in time. There are two ghat roads, two footpaths and many forest paths to reach the town. And in the centre of all this is the richest temple in India. To say that ensuring security here is a challenge will be an understatement.

As the popularity of the Lord of the Seven Hills grew with time, so did the security paraphernalia. As a child, this writer remembers driving or walking up the hill without undergoing frisking and having to pass through metal detectors.

The face of security was the lone *gurkha* you encountered on the footpath, keeping an eye out for petty thieves, not to mention the stray wild animal.

Today, if you drive up the ghat road, you are frisked and your luggage is subjected to close checks and X-ray scans. Ditto if



G.V.G. Ashok Kumar, IPS

you walk up. Security has come a long way at Tirumala. And the person currently responsible for that is G.V.G. Ashok Kumar, IPS, Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (CVSO), Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams.

There are over 2,000 security personnel in Tirumala and its different access points, says Mr. Ashok Kumar, an officer in the rank of Superintendent of Police,

on deputation from the Government of Andhra Pradesh. Permanent staff members of TTD along with policemen on deputation form the core team inside the temple and they are unarmed.

They are assisted by the AP Special Police and armed reserve guards who take care of outer perimeter security.

There is an Octopus commando unit stationed permanently at Tirumala to deal with any emergency. In addition, the TTD engages Home Guards and private security agencies.

The TTD has invested liberally in equipment such as baggage scanners and vehicle under-carriage scanners.

The Alipiri checkpost, the main entry point to Tirumala, is manned by the well-armed Special Protection Force, under the direct control of the CVSO. They are assisted by 10 explosives sniffing dogs.

At the Tirumala temple, work is on to fence off a core security zone comprising the four mada streets and the temple tank.



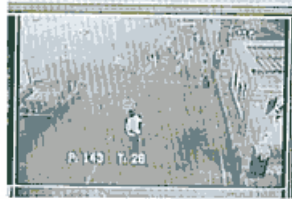
Soiled notes of Rs.1 crore a month on average are found in the hundi

While the fencing on three sides has been completed, work on the fourth side, which is around the main entrance, will be taken up after the Brahmotsavam. Once the fencing work is completed, people will be permitted to enter the core zone only after frisking, says Mr. Ashok Kumar.

Plans are afoot to build an outer cordon along the Outer Ring Road (ORR) in Tirumala which will have a 9 km perimeter. Construction of the first phase of the ORR is over. The second stage is under way.

Tirumala and Tirupati have about 350 security cameras. The number will shoot up to over 2,000 once a Rs.62-crore project that is now awaiting approvals is implemented. A proposal to declare the sky above Tirumala a 'no-fly zone' was sent to the Centre some time back but it was rejected. A Parliamentary Committee that recently visited Tirumala has asked that the proposal be re-sent. The TTD hopes that this time it will be accepted.

Over-speeding on the ghat roads is a problem, especially with numerous taxi and jeep operators plying up and down daily. The CVSO started cracking down on this a few months ago. If you are planning to drive up the hill you need to be watchful of the time you take, which cannot be



less than 28 minutes.

The security checkpoints at Alipiri downhill and Garudadri Nagar Checkpost in Tirumala time your trip based on the toll receipt and if you are found to have made the journey in less than the determined time, you will be fined Rs.500. On the downhill drive, the set time is 40 minutes – with

At the Tirumala temple, work is currently on to fence off a core security zone comprising the four mada streets and the temple tank.

similar consequences for over-speeding. It is not uncommon to find vehicles idling just before the two checkpoints on the two ghat roads with drivers biding time to fall in line with the rule. "This time we have implemented the rule seriously and without exceptions," says Mr Ashok Kumar, who was prompted to implement this after an accident in June this year that led to loss of lives.

Mr. Kumar, who was earlier DCP (Traffic), Hyderabad, has implemented a rule that jeeps and taxis that ferry pilgrims can make no more than three trips daily. The computers at the toll gate identify the vehicles based on registration numbers.



45 tonnes of foreign coins of unidentified origin are now in TTD's custody



A REPOSITORY CALLED SESHACHALAM BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The hill ranges are home to exotic species of flora and fauna

A . D . R a n g a r a j a n

The Seshachalam hill ranges of the Eastern Ghats were in 2011 designated as the Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve with the aim of conserving all forms of life there through a multi-pronged approach.

Distributed across Chittoor and Kadapa districts, the reserve is spread over 4,755.997 sq. km, covering 638 forest compartments. The area is demarcated into three concentric zones to undertake tasks of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

The core zone covering 750.589 sq. km. is free of habitations and is hence considered sacrosanct *vis-à-vis* human activity. It provides a suitable habitat for numerous plant and animal species (including higher order predators) and serves as a centre of endemism. It represents an important genetic reservoir. The Sri Venkateswara National Park falls in this zone.

The second layer, the buffer zone, covers 1,865.156 sq. km, including 240.87 sq. km of the Sri

Venkateswara Wildlife Sanctuary and is spread over 455 forest compartments. Similarly, the transition zone covers a 5 km radius from the buffer zone and is spread over 41 forest beats. The Tirumala temple and township, located in 27.21 sq. km., falls under this zone. The hills have a steep slope both in the north and the south and comprises seven peaks. These, Seshadri, Neeladri, Garudadri, Anjanadri, Vrishabhadri, Narayanadri and Venkatadri, are believed to represent the seven hoods of Adishesha. Hence the name Seshachalam. The area has a variety of geological rock and soil formations from the Precambrian period.

Notified as a reserve forest under the Indian Forest Act, 1927, the stretch of forest is categorised into red sanders bearing forest, southern dry mixed deciduous, dry deciduous, Hardwickia forest and dry Savannah forest. The reserve is home to nearly 1,756 species of flowering plants belonging to 879 genera and 176 families, covered under Polypetalae,

Gamaopetalae, Monochlamydeae and Monocotyledons.

Among the fauna found here are the giant squirrel, slender loris, mouse deer, golden gecko, leopard, elephant, sloth bear, Indian wolf, wild boar, chinkara, four-horned antelope, chital and sambar, mongoose, black buck, wild dog, jackal and civet cat. More than 150 species of birds are sighted in this area, including pea fowl, jungle fowl, partridge, quail, crested serpent eagle, Indian roller, kingfisher and white-bellied woodpecker.

The list includes the yellow-throated bulbul, an endangered bird species.

Poaching of animals and felling of red sander trees are rampant in the area. The Forest Department has created an anti-poaching range with its headquarters at Tirupati.

"Regular patrolling is done in the vulnerable routes and habitual offenders are booked under the Preventive Detention Act", says M. Ravi Kumar, Conservator of Forests, Tirupati Wildlife



Devotees offer about 100 kg of gold a month in the hundi



Management Circle. 'Vana Samrakshana Samithis' (Forest Protection Committees), involving the local community, have been formed.

When smuggled products are seized, 50 per cent of the compounding fee realised or 50 per cent of the value of the produce is shared with the committees as an incentive. The ultimate aim is to keep the dense vegetation in its pristine form.

The reserve is home to nearly 1,756 species of flowering plants belonging to 879 genera and 176 families, covered under polypetalae, gamaopetalae, monochlamydeae and monocotyledons.

To study the rich flora and fauna the hill ranges are endowed with, the Seshachalam Biodiversity Laboratory was set up in 2011. The lab is meant to provide accurate scientific information and devise predictive models for the conservation of biodiversity. The lab has studied *Boswellia ovalifoliolata* (Konda Sambrani), *Cycas beddomei* (Pereetha), *Indigofera barberi* (Adavi Neelimandhu), *Pimpinella tirupatiensis* (Adavi Kothimira) and *Pterocarpus santalinus* (Yerra Chandanam), among an impressive list of plants.

Reptiles like the Nagarjunasagar Racer (*Coluber bholanathi*),



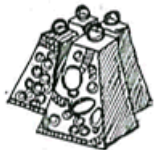
Eliot's Shieldtail (*Uropeltis elioti*) and Brown vine snake (*Ahaetulla pulverulenta*), a spider variety (*Poecilotheria metallica* Pocock) and a butterfly, Common banded peacock (*Papilio crino*), are among the rare sightings that triggered interest and amusement among biologists.

The study has also revealed interesting information such as the reappearance of the Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*) in southern Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh after a gap of 300 years. A total of 84 species of but-

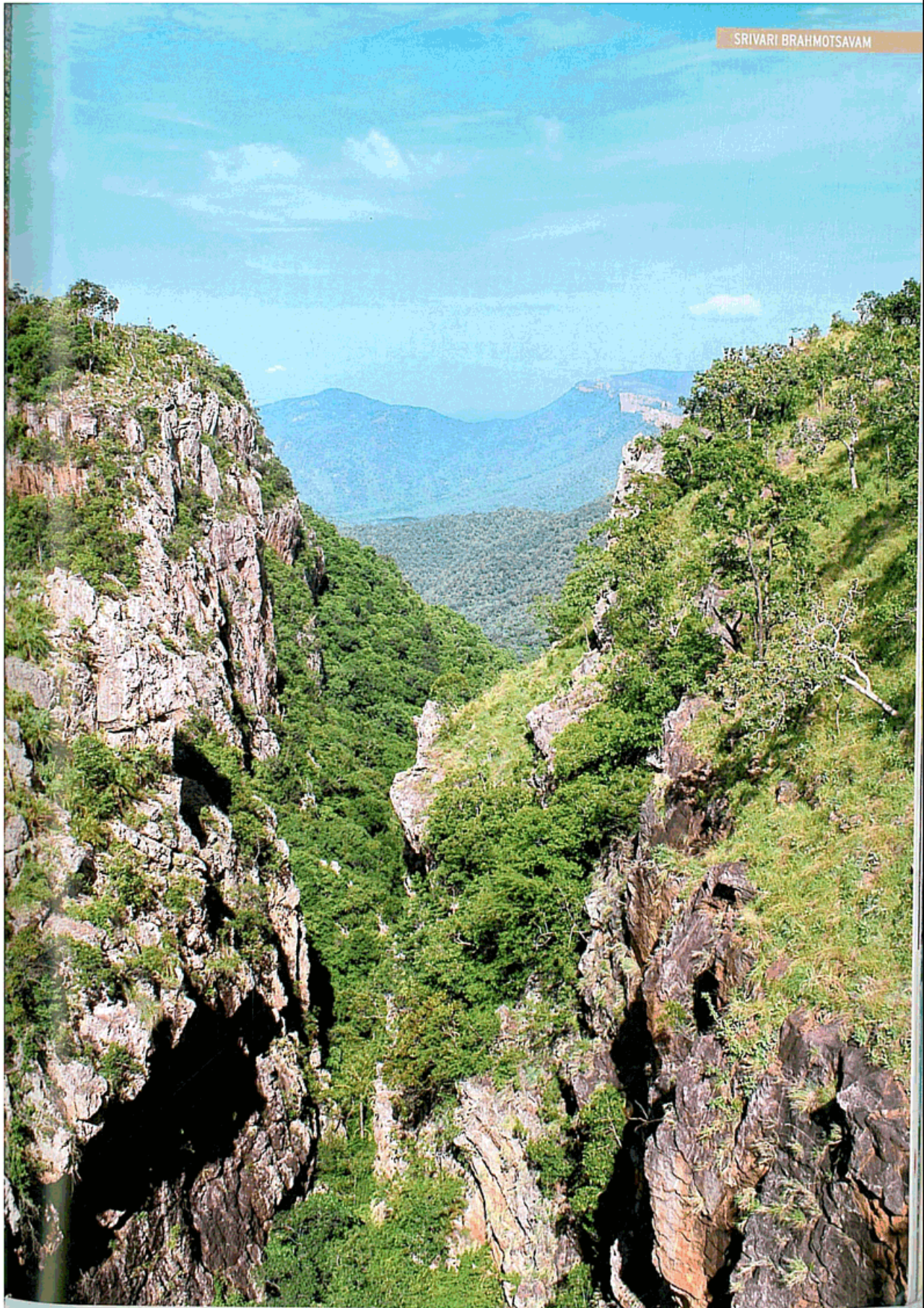
terflies are recorded here.

The lab is preparing an inventory of flora and fauna of the biosphere reserve to assess its biodiversity status.

The habitat of the leopard and that of its co-predators' prey are being monitored. According to N.V. Sivaram Prasad, Assistant Conservator of Forest (Biodiversity), the ethno-botany of the region, fodder species and their nutritional status, diversity of soil micro-organisms and their symbiotic association are some of the tasks on hand for the lab.



The TTD has a total silver stock of 20 tonnes currently



Over four lakh devotees have rendered service till now

SERVING PILGRIMS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

Srivari Seva, a volunteer programme at Tirumala, is becoming increasingly popular with devotees

C. Guruprasad Shukla

If you feel a refreshing altruistic breeze sweeping across the temple town of Tirumala these days, you can give credit to the Srivari Seva volunteers for that.

The sight of volunteers slog-ging for long hours at various pilgrim-choked points in the sacred town is one to behold. These volunteers are not experts in temple activities or in whatever jobs they may be volunteering to do, yet they creditably discharge the assignments given to them.

The voluntary service scheme – brainchild of the then Executive officer of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), P. Krishnaiah – was introduced in November 2000 to provide an opportunity to visiting pilgrims to rededicate themselves in the service of other pilgrims during their stay at Tirumala.

The scheme proved an instant success with pilgrims.

The fact that over four and a half lakh devotees have thus far rendered their services under the

With its impeccable record the Srivari Seva has emerged as one of the chief supporting organs of the prestigious institution in terms of crowd management and administration.

scheme reflects its growing popularity. There were only a handful of participants at the start.

Participants can do the work of their choice. They can either join the TTD staff and help them in manning the queue lines both inside and outside the temple, or lend a helping hand to the staff at the Nithya Annadanam complex.

They can assist the staff at the massive kalyanakatta (the centre for free tonsuring) or participate in the sacred task of stringing flowers required for temple rituals.

With the list of pilgrims ready to render voluntary service in-creasing manifold, the manage-

ment has extended the services of volunteers to other specified departments including vigilance, health, medical, book stalls and garden.

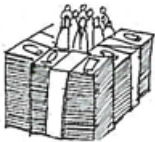
Buoyed by the flawless profile and clean record of the sevaks, the management was encouraged to utilise their services at the parakamani centre – where the hundi offerings are sorted.

The move has helped speed up the counting of currency notes, enabling the parakamani centre to clear all its proceeds received by way of offerings on a day-to-day basis.

Another area where the deployment of the services of volunteers has yielded positive results is the laddu selling counters – which was earlier beset by irregularities.

With its impeccable record, the Srivari Seva has emerged as one of the chief supporting organs of the institution in terms of crowd management and the administrative mechanism.

In an attempt to provide a more conducive atmosphere for the seva volunteers and encourage



TTD's salary bill is about Rs.25 crore a month

Participants can do work of their choice. They can either join the TTD staff and help them in manning the queue lines both inside and outside the temple, or lend a helping hand to the staff at the Nithya Annadanam complex.

their participation, the management has resolved to construct a massive Srivari Seva complex — equipped with dormitories, locker facilities and rest rooms at Tirumala at a cost of Rs.70 crore.

According to the TTD's Public Relations Officer T. Ravi, who is also the chief co-ordinator of the scheme, efforts are on to bring the orphanage centre, leprosy hospital and medical institutions under the scope of the scheme.

The service rendered is selfless. As a TTD official put it: "The Srivari Seva volunteers will do any job you ask them to. All that they want in return is darshan of the Lord once a day, which we grant."

Srivari sevaks at work in the free meals hall and kitchen



TTD IS NOT ALL ABOUT THE TEMPLE

How devotees' offerings are ploughed back for the benefit of society

A . D . R a n g a r a j a n

The administration of the Sri Venkateswara temple is generally considered the major activity of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), but its wider activities, that add up to a virtual social revolution, are creating a lasting impact on millions of lives.

In the true spirit of the adage 'Service to mankind is service to God', the TTD runs a range of socially-relevant programmes, which over the decades have improved the life of the common man. Its intervention in the fields of education, medical and health services including critical care, disability mitigation, heritage preservation and forest management need special mention.

The Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS), the TTD-funded super-specialty hospital in Tirupati, is developed on the lines of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. "Apart from postgraduate programmes and certificate courses, there are colleges for physiother-

apy and nursing, all under one roof", says its Director and Vice-Chancellor, B.Vengamma.

The Sri Venkateswara Pranadana Trust is virtually a life-saver of a scheme, as it provides succour to poor patients with life-threatening diseases related to the heart, kidney and brain, and cancer by bringing expensive treatment within their reach. The scheme encourages research and development in the treatment of diseases/conditions like chronic renal failure, haemophilia, thalassemia and cancer.

The Balaji Institute of Surgery, Research and Rehabilitation for the Disabled (BIRRD) is a super-specialty hospital run by the TTD to treat orthopaedically-challenged patients suffering from poliomyelitis, cerebral palsy, congenital anomalies and spinal injuries.

The hospital uses state-of-the-art medical technology to provide services to the poor at no cost. According to BIRRD Director G. Jagadish, artificial limbs, calipers and aids, food, medicines and

post-operative care are provided free of cost.

Extending the services of its school for children with hearing impairment, the TTD launched the Sravanam project to identify hearing impairment in infants so as to correct it at an early stage. Aural disorders often get out of hand when they are ignored in infancy and hence the move to 'catch them young'. Tying up with Chennai-based Sankara Nethralaya, it established the Sri Srinivasa Sankara Nethralaya Trust to provide modern ophthalmic treatment to the poor, to establish an eye bank and a home for the visually challenged. The trust funds research in medicine – allopathic, homeopathic, ayurvedic or unani, with particular reference to eye diseases. Similarly, leprosy patients are treated, cured and housed at the Sri Venkateswara Poor Home compound. A home for the elderly is also being run.

The TTD established the Sri Venkateswara Balamandir in 1943 in Tirupati. It houses orphaned boys and girls. Children with both



Even the dust in the hundi is weighed and analysed for fragments of valuable metal that can be salvaged

parents dead, and those whose mother is unable to bring them up after the death of their father, are admitted here. Food, accommodation, clothing and education from class I to graduation in TTD-run schools and colleges are provided. Meritorious students are given coaching for EAMCET, the state-level common entrance test for admission into engineering, agricultural and medical colleges. Several 'Balamandirites' are now in good positions across the globe and have made their alma mater proud.

The Sri Venkateswara Gosamrakshana Trust was established not just to house cattle, but also to emphasise the spiritual importance of the cow and study its economic aspects. The SV Dairy Farm supplies milk and curd to all TTD temples for rituals and for making 'prasadam', and to institutions under the TTD umbrella. People donate cows to this centre as 'Go Daanam' (cow donation) to fulfill vows. Five litres of cow milk will be supplied to the Tirumala temple on a Friday for performing 'Ksheerabhishekam' (celestial bath with milk) to the deity in the name of donors who contribute Rs.5 lakh and above for this scheme.

On the education front, the TTD runs institutions ranging from schools to universities. Thousands of students study in the high schools, junior colleges, degree colleges, the SVIMS University and the SV Vedic University. The Sri Venkateswara Vidyadana Trust provides scholarships to meritorious students below the poverty line.

The temples are built in conformity with Shilpa Agama, the science of temple architecture, where calculations and norms are followed to install and consecrate the canopy (Vimana), develop the precincts (Praakaara), design the Bali Peetha or Dhawaja Sthamba and the main idol in the sanctum sanctorum. Due to natural calamities or neglect, the structures get damaged or distorted. Aware of its responsibility towards preserving the culture and traditions of the land, the TTD formed the Sri Venkateswara Heritage Preservation Trust to restore and renovate damaged and dilapidated temple structures.

The preservation of the Vedic tradition is another area of focus. The Sri Venkateswara Veda Parirakshana Trust scheme aims to identify, study and bring to light aspects of Vedic knowledge, take

steps to propagate the invaluable knowledge contained in them and enlighten the masses about them. There is a scheme to provide financial assistance to aged scholars who impart training to their disciples at their respective homes in the gurukul mode.

The TTD has several innovative schemes to reach out to the

ing on demand and patronage. The programme provides even the not-so-religious among the believers the ecstatic feeling of witnessing the celestial wedding. The programme has triggered keen interest in religious values among many and brought them into the fold of Sanatana Dharma.

Govinda Kalyanam is a scheme



Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS), the TTD-funded super specialty hospital in Tirupati is developed on the lines of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi.

marginalised sections of society. Though dubbed by many as populist, the programmes have brought hitherto-neglected social groups into the fold of Hinduism.

Kalyanotsavam, the celestial wedding of Lord Venkateswara with His consorts Sridevi and Bhodevi, is performed at Tirumala every day. For the benefit of those who are unable to visit the temple often, the TTD launched a programme, called Srinivasa Kalyanam, in which the same ritual is performed using identical deities at various places in the country and even abroad, depend-

ing on demand and patronage. The programme provides even the not-so-religious among the believers the ecstatic feeling of witnessing the celestial wedding. The programme has triggered keen interest in religious values among many and brought them into the fold of Sanatana Dharma.

Govinda Kalyanam is a scheme that goes the extra mile to reach out to deprived sections in the tribal/Dalit hamlets and fishermen habitations along the coastline, where some people often get weaned away from the Vedic faith.

The TTD accepts donations above Rs.1,000 from philanthropists, which will go directly to the corpus fund. Donations made to the schemes are eligible for exemption under section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act.

Remarkably for a religious institution, the TTD runs many social obligation schemes, which are divergent in nature. Yet it is not distracted from its core objective of temple management. The TTD has been doing yeoman service to society through such well-meaning schemes.



The financial records of TTD are up to date and the latest financial position can be got with just a click of the mouse

A NEW VEHICLE FOR LORD VENKATESWARA

A second golden chariot that will be used in the coming Brahmotsavam

C. Guruprasad Shukla

The riches of Lord Venkateswara, the presiding deity at Tirumala, are legendary. One more chapter will be added to that when the second Golden Chariot participates in this year's Brahmotsavam carrying the Lord and his two divine consorts, Sridevi and Bhoodevi.

There are few temples in the country that can boast of a golden chariot. The second one at Tirumala is considered the heaviest of them all at 28 tonnes.

As much as 78 kg of 24 carat gold worth Rs. 23.80 crore and 2,900 kg of copper worth over Rs. 13.80 lakh went into the making of the chariot, which stands 32 feet tall. The total cost is around Rs. 25 crore, with the labour charges alone accounting for Rs. 40.60 lakh.

The wooden frame of solid teak was derived from the silver chariot which was kept in disassembled form in Tirupati. The various parts were then transported



to Tirumala and assembled in a secure location inside the Sri Venkateswara Museum, about a kilometre from the temple.

As much as 78 kg of 24 carat gold worth Rs. 23.80 crore and 2,900 kg of copper worth over Rs. 13.80 lakh went into the making of the chariot, which stands 32 feet tall.

Copper sheets with engravings are coated with thin gold foil using a heat treatment process. These sheets are riveted onto the wooden frame. Work was on in right earnest when this correspondent visited the spot in mid-September.

About 16 craftsmen hailing from Kumbakonam and Madurai in Tamil Nadu were specially commissioned for the purpose by S A T Menon of Kerala to whom the job was entrusted.

TTD's Joint Executive Officer K S Sreenivasa Raju said the new chariot will be inducted into the divine service of the Lord during the Brahmotsavam starting October 5.



The free meals, under Nithya Annadanam scheme, feed about 60,000 pilgrims daily

DONATE A COW AND EARN HIS BLESSINGS

With over 1,900 heads of cattle, the Goshala is an important part of TTD

Raghuvir Srinivasan

Go-danam or gifting away a cow, is considered to be the highest form of charity. The Gosamakshana Trust operated by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) gives devotees the opportunity to participate in this charity. The trust runs the Sri Venkateswara Gosamakshana Shala in Tirupati where over 1,900 heads of cattle are nurtured and taken care of.

All of these are donated by devotees and the *goshala* boasts of several breeds of cows such as Ongole, Gir, Kankreg, Hallikar, Kangeyam, Punganur, Sahiwal and Kapila. Of these, 140 are milch cows that together yield 1,800 litres of milk per day, 98 per cent of which is sent to the three temples at Tirumala, Tirupati and Tiruchanur.

"We never say no to cow donations, even if they are old animals that don't yield milk," says Dr. K. Haranath Reddy, Director, Sri Venkateswara Gosamakshana Shala in Tirupati. Devotees who



Ongole breed cow and calf at the Goshala

wish to donate a cow can pay the Trust. "The cost of a cow starts from Rs.40,000 and goes up to

Rs.5 lakh but people can donate whatever they wish", says Dr. Reddy. In addition to this one, there is



Sifa thoranam or natural rock arch on Tirumala points to the area having been under water millions of years ago

Of these, 140 are milch cows that together yield 1,800 litres of milk per day, 98 per cent of which is sent to the three temples at Tirumala, Tirupati and Tiruchanur.

a small *goshala* at Tirumala with three milch cows.

The milk from these cows is used for the Lord's Ekantaseva every night.

The *goshala* at Tirupati is spread over 65 acres and in addition to cows it also hosts elephants and horses belonging to the Sri Govindarajaswamy Temple in Tirupati. Plans are afoot to set up a new *goshala* extending over 450 acres at Palamaner, near Tirupati.

Once this *goshala* starts operations, the trust will be able to supply the milk needs of the Tirumala temple fully for the Lord's *abishekam* and for preparation of prasadam.



TIRUCHANNOOR, WHERE ALARMELU MANGA THAYAR REIGNS

Tradition has it that every pilgrim to the Seven Hills must first offer obeisance to the Goddess at this temple

Sudha Jagannathan

Sri Alarmelu Manga Thayar is the presiding 'Moola' deity of the Tiruchanoor temple, near Tirupati. She is believed to be the incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi. Padmavathi Thayar is the utsava deity of the temple. Since she emerged from the lotus, she came to be known as Padmavathy. Tradition has it that every pilgrim to the Seven Hills must first offer obeisance to the Goddess at this temple. They can proceed to the Lord Venkateswara temple atop the hill only thereafter. Her intercession or recommendation is indispensable to gain the favour of Sri Venkateswara at Tirumala. Alarmelu Manga is the Mother Goddess of Sri Vaishnavites, particularly, and Hindus, in general. Annual Kartheeka Brahmotsavam is held at this temple in the month of November. Panchami Teertham takes place at Padma Sarovar on the ninth and concluding day of the Brahmotsavam. This temple adheres to the Pancharatra agama way of worship. Annamacharya, the Telugu poet, had composed a



The Nitya Annadam scheme with a current corpus of Rs.436 crore is almost fully funded through donations



number of kritis on this Goddess. Vedantha Desika, the Vaishnavite Acharya, had even composed the Daya Satakam in Sanskrit on Alarmelu Manga and Srinivasa.

There are references in the Puranas and epics to Vedavathi, who was reborn as Padmavathi and married Lord Srinivasa in Kaliyuga. While Agni carried Sita to the safety of his abode, Vedavathi took the guise of Sita. Thinking that she (Vedavathi in disguise) was Sita

herself, demon Ravana carried her (Vedavathi) away, and placed her in confinement at Asoka vana for 12 months. After defeating Ravana, Lord Rama went to Ayodhya with Sita. Vedavathi wanted to marry Rama. Her request was politely turned down. Rama vowed that he would marry only once in Treta Yuga, as he followed the dharma of uthama purusha. However, he fulfilled Vedavathi's wish in Kaliyuga. As Srinivasa, he married Vedavathi, who was reborn as Padmavathi. Krishna's mother Yeshoda did not attend her son's marriage as she was away in Gokul. Hence, she longed very much to see his marriage. Yeshoda, too, was also reborn as Vakulamalika, Srinivasa's mother. Legend has it that much later, she arranged an alliance between Srinivasa and Padmavathi Thayar, daughter of Akasha Raja and Dharaani Devi, and saw them getting married under the guidance of Sukha Brahma Rishi.

(The author is a Sanskrit research scholar at the University of Madras)

Pedda Jeeyar Mutt was established by Sri Ramanuja

"I AM HERE TO PERPETUATE SRI RAMANUJA PARAMPARA"

Interview with His Holiness Sri Peria Kovil Kelvi Appan Sri Satagopa Ramanuja Jeeyar

A . D . R a n g a r a j a n

The traditions and practices observed in any temple are preserved in the form of ancient doctrines, either chiselled on stone or written on palm leaf manuscripts.

Nitya Kalyanam Paccha Thoranam is a saying associated with the Lord Venkateswara temple, indicating that the celestial wedding (Kalyanotsavam) is performed every day here and mango leaves (symbolising auspiciousness) always adorn the main threshold of the temple. The temple calendar has several rituals and festivals chronologically divided as *Nityotsavam*, *Vaarotsavam*, *Pakshotsavam*, *Masotsavam* and *Samvatsarotsavam*, that is, those performed daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly and annually. Adherence to the religious doctrines and the pre-set guidelines is difficult, leaving scope for deviation or violation of procedures.

The Jeeyar is not just an individual, but an institution meant to monitor each and every ritual

at the temple and to ensure adherence to stipulated practices. Bhagawad Ramanuja, also called 'Sri Bhashyakara' or 'Udayavar', prepared a doctrine of Vaishnava Sampradaya and implemented it through the length and breadth of the country. With the spread of non-Vedic religions across South India in the fifth century alongside the Vedic religion, Sri Ramanuja undertook systematisation and standardisation of procedures to guard it from external influence.

The Pedda (Periya) Jeeyar Mutt in Tirupati is believed to have been established by Sri Ramanuja himself in the year 1057 CE. The seer is the overseer of all religious practices at the temple.

The present Pedda Jeeyar, His Holiness Sri Peria Koil Kelvi Appan Sri Satagopa Ramanuja Jeeyar, answered questions from *The Hindu* on the mutt, the temple and rituals. Excerpts:

When was the Mutt established and by whom?

The Mutt was established in the year 1057 CE. Srimad Ramanuja

himself was behind the founding of the Mutt, and he anointed Sri Tiruvenkata Ramanuja Pedda Jeeyar as the first pontiff. Even the savant Sri Manavala Mamuni acted as the Jeeyar here in the year 1503 and rendered service for a brief period of three years. It was during his regime that the Chinna Jeeyar Mutt was also established and a junior pontiff appointed to assist the senior. The junior pontiff is generally considered the successor to the senior.

What is the contribution of Sri Ramanuja to Tirumala temple?

According to history, Sri Ramanuja visited Tirupati-Tirumala thrice and every time he had made significant contribution and added value to the temple.

During his first visit, it was Sri Ramanuja who presented the holy conch and discus (Sankhu-Chakra) to Sri Venkateswara and hence he is considered the Acharya even to the Lord. *Scavana Asthanam* is performed on the ninth day of the annual Brahmot-



The laddu potu or kitchen is modernised with gas ovens, wet grinders and granite tabletops

savam, when the deity of Lord Venkateswara is placed in sitting posture facing the Sri Ramanuja (Bhashyakar) Sannidhi inside the temple complex, as a mark of respect to the Guru. The deity is also stopped for a brief while in front of the Sannidhi during all processions taken through the inner precincts (Vimana Praakaaram).

Again, Sri Ramanuja played a significant role in developing the four mada streets encircling the temple to enable conduct of festivals and processions. He also laid out the procedures meant to be adhered to and also prepared the itinerary for the conduct of the annual Brahmotsavams.

The details can be found in the TTD's epigraphic records. During his third visit, he consecrated the deity of Sri Govindaraja at Tirupati downhill.

What is the role of the Mutt in temple administration?

The Mutt is considered the Dharmakartha that is, the highest trustee in charge of all religious activities. The Jeeyar is the 'Dravida Veda Adhikari', that is, the authority to monitor the recitation of 'Nalayira Divya Prabandham' (4000 Tamil verses) on various occasions in the temple. Along with the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) management, the Jeeyar has equal responsibility over the deity, whenever it comes out of the temple on processions. The seer has to ensure adherence to propriety and norms, look for deviations, if any, from set procedures and correct them.

There are two seals, one with the TTD and one with the Mutt, the latter having an embossed Hanuman emblem. Every act is recorded simultaneously at both the ends. The Jeeyar Mutt is vested with one of the keys required to open the temple main door. Right from opening the door for conducting Suprabhatham, lighting the lamp, offering Theertham and till the Ekanta Seva when the temple is closed, the Jeeyar has a role. To put it simply, anything entering the sanctum sanctorum has to be endorsed and certified by the Jeeyar or his representative (Ekangi).

Does the Mutt have temples anywhere else?

Yes, the Sri Bhaktavatsala Perumal temple at Thiruninravur on the outskirts of Chennai belongs to the Pedda Jeeyar Mutt. Similarly, the Chinna Jeeyar Mutt administers the Sri Narasimha Swamy

The Jeeyar is not just an individual, but an institution meant to monitor each and every ritual at the temple and to ensure adherence to stipulated practices.

temple at Singarayakonda in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

What are the facilities provided by the Mutt to the pilgrims at Tirumala?

The Mutt is basically meant to feed the devout who arrive at Tirumala for a darshan of the Lord. Food is provided in sufficient quantities both at the Pedda Jeeyar Mutt and Chinna Jeeyar Mutt at Tirumala. Devotees also stay here for the night before participating in the pre-dawn rituals. We also offer our premises free of cost to the public for performing small domestic functions.

What is your association with Tirumala and the Mutt before taking over as the 44th pontiff?

I was born in 1951 at Thiruinadur, one of the 108 Vaishnavite Divyadesams, located near Mayavaram in Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu. I joined the TTD's Dharmagiri Vedapatasala (Vedic School) on Tirumala hills in 1960



JEEYAR SAATRUMURAI

S. Varadharajan

The practice of Jeeyar Saatrumurai at the sanctum of Lord Venkateswara is in place for several generations. It is said Bhagavat Ramanuja introduced this practice and is followed ever since. All temples follow this procedure. One can see a gathering of Sri Vaishnavas accompanying the jeeyar swami for attending this ritual in the wee hours every day and they consider this a great privilege. The Jeeyar or his representative - an Ekangi - screens the individuals conforming to the Sri Vaishnava attire.

A write-up by R. Varadarajan in *The Hindu* on March 23, 2001, says Sri Ramanuja systematised *aaradhanam* (daily puja) in the Srirangam

and Tirumala temples. A jeeyar was appointed to assist and supervise the rituals according to the Agama Sastras.

The Saatrumurai in Tirumala is popularly known as the Jeeyar Sevai because he leads the Sri Vaishnavas for this main event when they chant in chorus the last two stanzas of Andal's *Tiruppavai*, Periyazhwar's *Tirupallanadu* and Vazhi *Tirunamam* of Sri Ramanuja and recite a set of verses in praise of acharya lineage in the presence of Lord Venkateswara. After the chanting, *Mangalarathi* is performed to the Moolavar and *theertham* and *Sri Shataari* are offered to the Sri Vaishnava Bhagavatas. This marks the grand finale of the day's morning worship known as *Abhigamana Aaradhanam*.

and studied Nalayira Divya Prabandham, Sanskrit, Vedas and also English. I joined the Mutt in 1970 as Adhyapaka and worked in various temples of TTD. In 2004, the then Pedda Jeeyar appointed me as the Chinna Jeeyar. After he attained moksha, I assumed

charge through *Pattabhishekam* (coronation) on April 1, 2010.

I am here to perpetuate Sri Ramanuja Parampara which has been in practice at our temple for over 950 years and will strive for the propagation of the Sampradaya.



A laboratory monitors the quality of the laddu regularly

A VISION TO MATCH THE MAMMOTH SCALE

M. Giridhara Gopal, IAS,
Executive Officer, TTD, spells out the tasks

A . D . R a n g a r a j a n

*Venkatadri Samam Sthanam
Brahmande Nasti Kinchana,
Venkatesa Samo Devo Na Bhoot-
ho Na Bhavishyathi...*

(There is no place as magnificent as Venkatadri (Tirumala) and there is no God as special as Him, neither in the past, nor in the future.)

The story of the shrine of Lord Venkateswara is a story of superlatives. The Lord's kitchen consumes 3,600 tonnes of ghee and 600 tonnes of cashew nuts per annum for making prasadam. Food is provided to all pilgrims free of cost (nearly 1.65 lakh servings a day).

Tirumala consumes 800 million gallons of water per year and has four dams — Akasa Ganga, Papavinasam, Gogarbhram and Kumaradhara-Pasupudhara — on the hills to meet its requirements.

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) consumes 7 million units of power a month, incurring an expenditure of Rs.50



crore. The TTD runs over two dozen educational institutions, including the oldest Vedic institute maintained since 125 years.

The world's biggest tonsuring centre, Kalyanakatta, has 600 barbers working round the clock to shave the heads of pilgrims by using 30,000 blades a day. (Blades are discarded after single use to avoid infection).

It is the only temple to earn

a mind-boggling Rs.200 crore a year from the sale of human hair.

The temple maintains a forest area of 3,200 hectares. A variety of flowers (400 tonnes per annum) meant for use in the temple rituals are grown in its own gardens spread over 80 hectares.

In a nutshell, Lord Venkateswara is the richest deity on the earth with a budgetary revenue of Rs. 2,250 crore per annum.



The Tirupati laddu has a Geographical Indicator tag, which means that it is patented and cannot be copied

When things happen on such a massive scale and at a fast pace, does it not require a vision to ensure permanence and make development sustainable?

"Yes, we have a broad vision for the next two decades or so, but the priorities keep changing depending on the dynamic situation", says the TTD's Executive Officer M. Girdhara Gopal.

The first and foremost priority is to constantly monitor the traditional practices and rituals (Kainkaryams) at the temple and ensure their conduct as prescribed in the Agama Sastras. As violation of set practices is considered sacrilegious and invites the attention of pilgrims across the globe, the temple management takes special care to ensure adherence to doctrines.

To ensure balanced growth and reduce damage to the environment in future, the TTD is keen to enforce sustainable development practices on the ecologically-sensitive Tirumala hills.

By tapping power from solar

Through its array of propagation arms like Hindu Dharma Prachara Parishat, Alwar Divyaprabandha Project, Annamacharya Project, etc., the TTD regularly conducts activities in hamlets to spread devotion among the masses.

and wind energy sources, the TTD has significantly brought down not only its power bills, but also the pressure on the fragile eco-system. The TTD's kitchen meant to cook food for pilgrims has a mammoth solar cooking system, while the Tirumala hill ranges have an impressive array of wind mills.

According to Mr. Gopal, a senior IAS officer, top priority is also being accorded to improving the physical and spiritual comfort of the visiting devotees.

There are number of cottages

and guest houses on the hills, while food, water, stay and darshan are available free to the common devotee.

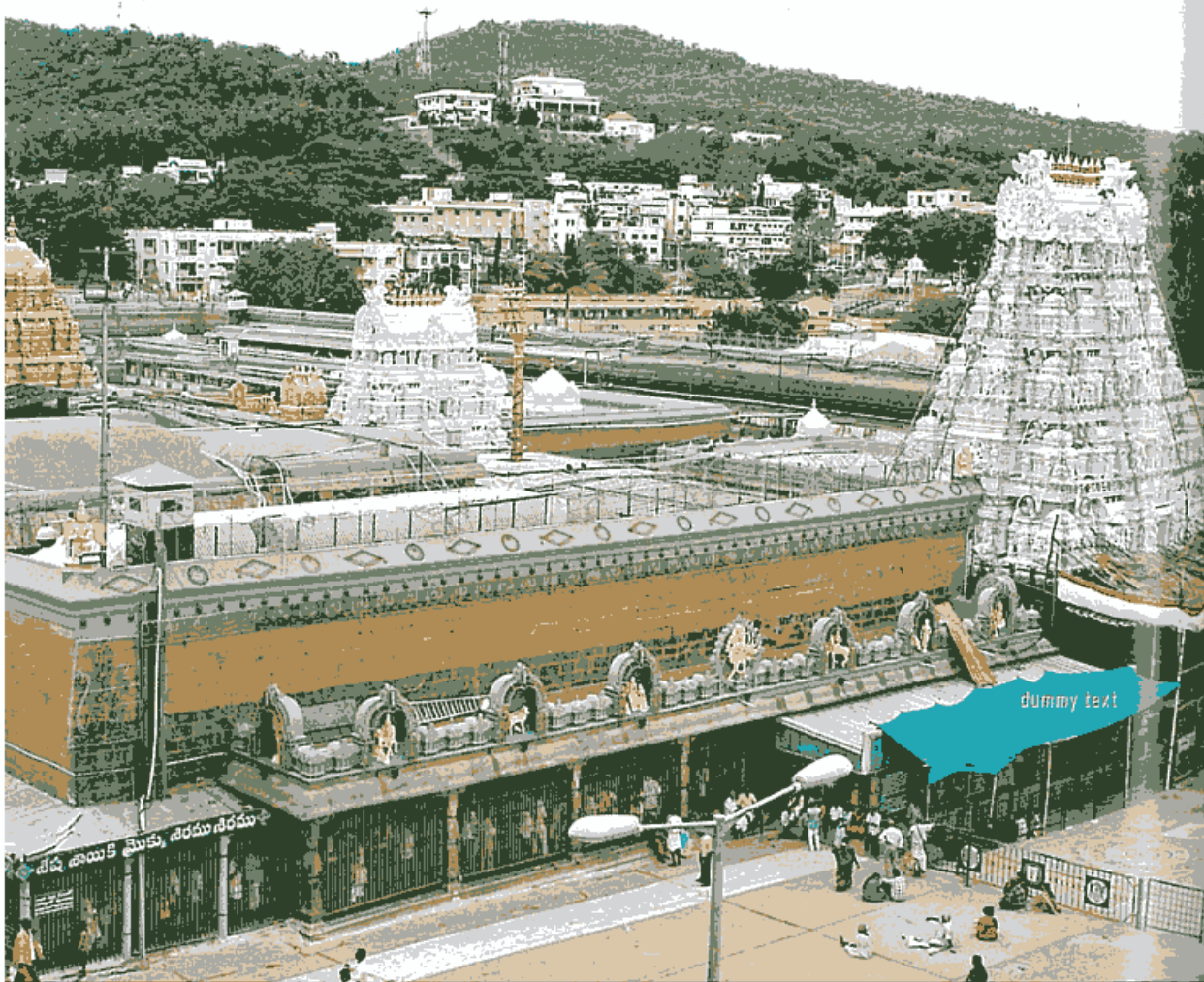
Another important area that the TTD wants to focus on is Dharma Pracharam. Through its array of propagation arms like Hindu Dharma Prachara Parishat, Alwar Divyaprabandha Project and Annamacharya Project, the TTD regularly conducts activities in hamlets to spread devotion among the masses.

"We will continue to extensively take up activities through cultural programmes, spiritual orations and Dharmic congregations to propagate Sri Venkateswara cult", Mr. Gopal told *The Hindu* in an interview.

Armed with huge manpower and enviable financial strengths, the administration of the revered Hindu temple in the world is putting its best foot forward in serving the thousands of pilgrims who come for a darshan of the Lord.



The inner potu where naivedhyam offerings to the Lord are prepared still runs on firewood



"THE WAY TTD IS SURVIVING AMIDST PRESSURES IS TESTIMONY TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD"

Interview with K. S. Sreenivasa Raju, IAS,
Joint Executive Officer, TTD

Raghuvir Srinivasan

He's virtually the second most important man in Tirumala after the Lord himself. As the Joint Executive Officer of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) responsible for overall administration of the temple town, K.S. Sreenivasa Raju, IAS, oversees the affairs of everything from the temple complex, the Vaikuntam queue complex, footpath, the Kalyanakatta where devotees touse their heads and the Nitya Anandanam project.

"The way TTD is surviving amidst pressures and vulnerabilities is testimony to the presence of God," says Mr. Raju in utter humility.

Amidst hectic planning for the ensuing Brahmotsavam, Mr. Raju squeezed in time for *The Hindu* at the end of a busy day in mid-September. Here are some takeaways from the interview:

On TTD and the population at Tirumala

- 94 per cent of TTD's income



comes from Tirumala

- TTD is a notified gram panchayat.
- An average of 63,000 pilgrims have darshan of Lord Venkateswara every day.
- On 100 days in a year, the number of people who have darshan shoots past 70,000 a day.
- On 25-30 days, there will be more than 1 lakh people having darshan. "This is when we will be put to test," says Mr. Raju. This

happens mainly during the Brahmotsavam, about ten days during the year end, ten days during summer especially when the examination results are announced and about 3-4 days during August.

- Apart from those having darshan, there will be about 20,000 people waiting in the queue complex at any given time, another 20,000 floating around the hill town plus locals of about 20,000 in number, including shopkeepers. In sum, almost 1.20 lakh people are present at Tirumala at any given point in time.

On modes of transport for devotees

- About 15,000 people trek up the footpath daily on an average.
- On about 100 days in a year, this goes up to 25,000 a day; on Garuda Seva day about 54,000 pilgrims trek on the footpath.
- Between 20,000 and 25,000 pilgrims use the bus service. The service uses 250 buses that together make 1,500 trips a day. On an average, every bus makes 3 trips up and 3 trips down.



The Lord's kitchen consumes over 3,600 tonnes of ghee and 600 tonnes of cashew-nuts per annum



Power from wind

Close to a third of the power consumed in Tirumala is derived from windmills. There are a total of eight windmills in the hills surrounding the temple with an aggregate capacity to generate 8.23 MW of power. Of course, 80 per cent of the power produced by these windmills is in the May-September period.

The temple town consumes 480 lakh units of power per annum of which 140 lakh units are from wind energy. Six of the windmills adding up to 7.5 MW capacity are operated by Suzlon on BOLT (Build, own, lease and transfer) basis where TTD pays Rs.199 a unit to the company. About 120 lakh units are bought thus.

Two more windmills of 800 kw capacity have been donated by Enercon, the energy from which is free. The TTD has done a study and located places where further windmills can be put for a total of 7.2 MW capacity. That will bring in another 140 lakh units and further add to the green quotient of Tirumala.

- Between 15,000 and 20,000 pilgrims use private transport. Around 4,400 cars drive up on an average day and they stay at Tirumala for 32 hours on an average, which is the same time that a devotee spends in the hill town.

On darshan tickets

- "We are partial to the common pilgrims who cannot pay for darshan," says Mr. Raju

- Only 17,500 tickets of Rs.300 denomination are sold in a day where devotees buy the ticket and head straight for darshan.

- Only 9,500 tickets of Rs.50 denomination are sold daily. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, only half this number is sold. Pilgrims can book these tickets on-line through TTD's website or through the 84 e-darshan counters across the country.

- Those trekking up the footpath are rewarded with free darshan. Called Divyadarshan, those in this queue will have a 10-hour advantage over those waiting in the Sarvadarshan queue, which is free darshan.

On accommodation at Tirumala

- Accommodation can be booked on-line or through e-darshan counters.

- Accommodation is always in deficit but Mr. Raju says that there is no point in increasing capacity because darshan capacity cannot be increased.

On darshan

- Peak capacity is 90,000 people per day.

- If darshan is allowed until Kulasekara padi the capacity is 1,200 pilgrims an hour.

- Lagu darshan, which is one

compartment before Kulasekara padi, can allow 3,000 pilgrims an hour.

- Mahalagu darshan, which is from near the Bangaru vakili (dwarapalakas) can permit 4,500 pilgrims an hour. This is the darshan that pilgrims get 80 per cent of the time.

- There are a total of 6 hundis inside the temple though devotees prefer the main one in the inner sanctorum.

- The TTD is spending about Rs.100 crore on expanding civic amenities in Tirumala ever year. An outer ring road in four quadrants is now under construction and will run around the perimeter of the temple town in five years' time.

- "We want Tirumala to be pedestrian-friendly. Only battery operated buggies will be allowed in the town once the ring road is completed," says Mr. Raju.

Papavinasanam Dam at Tirumala



Tirumala consumes 800 million gallons of water per year and has four dams

WHEN THE LORD SETTLED THE DISPUTE HIMSELF

A History of Tirupati, written by Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, and published in 1940, chronicles the history of the temple at Tirumala

K. T. Jagannathan

Dewan Bahadur Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyangar was Honorary Correspondent of the Archaeological Survey of India and his book, in two volumes, records in fascinating detail the role played by Saint Ramanuja and his disciples in not just building the Vishnu temple at Tirumala but also in codifying the governance procedure.

We present here some facts gleaned from the two volumes of this early book on Tirupati.

When God gave the verdict!

Is it Siva? Or, is it Vishnu? As the debate raged, Vaishnava Acharya Ramanuja countered the arguments of Saivas in the Court of Yadavaraya. A convinced Yadavaraya ruled that the God is indeed the Vishnu. Upset, the Saivas accused Yadavaraya of giving in to some "occult influence". Sensing the mood of the Saivas, Ramanuja suggested that the dispute be left to God himself to resolve. It was decided that weap-

ons peculiar to Siva and Vishnu be placed in the sanctum of the temple.

Depending on the weapons the image of the God assumed the following morning, he would be identified as Siva or Vishnu. As the shrine opened the following morning, the God inside had in his hands the sacred conch and chakra! Ramanuja, thus, set to rest any doubts on Tirupati being a Vishnu temple.

The kitchen well

Ever since he settled down in the hills, Tirumalai Nambi, principal disciple of Alavandar, used to fetch water from Papanasa for kitchen services at the temple. He was doing this because the wells in the Rangadasa garden had fallen into disrepair. Tirumalai Nambi was unwell when Alavandar visited the hills once, and, hence, could not do this water collection job.

A concerned Alavandar got divine nod to use the water from the well inside the premises of the temple for kitchen services.

The well was dug by Rangadasa, and known as "Sundarasvami". God, it is believed, had himself accepted the water from this well to be equivalent to that of Papanasa.

The Ramanujapuram

The Vishnu God atop the hill temple gives darshan in a standing posture. The God is believed to be in that posture at Vaikuntha (the heaven), too.

At the temple in the foot of the Tirupati hill, Govindarajaswamy, however, is in a sleeping stance on Ananta, the serpent, atop the ocean of milk. The temple came up, thanks to the efforts of Yadavaraya, who decided to house some of the movable images brought in by Vaishnavas from Chidambaram where too Govindarajaswamy lies on Ananta. He not only built the temple but also houses around it to form an Agrahara called Ramanujapuram!

The chin of the Lord

Amid the jostling to get a close look at Lord Venkateswara, you



About 8,000 kg of rice and 3 tonnes of vegetables are consumed daily in the kitchen

cannot miss the white camphor mixture on the chin of the Lord. What is it? Well, the story goes like this. Anantarya, a disciple of Ramanuja, was digging a small tank for watering his garden. While doing so, he got his pregnant wife too to join in. She was forced to remove the excavated mud to a distant place.

God took the form of a young bachelor, and did the clearing job himself, relieving her of the labour. Anantarya wasn't amused, as the bachelor was depriving them of the pleasure of serving God. The unknown lad wouldn't listen to him, however. An exasperated Anantarya hit him with the butt-end of the shovel. The boy disappeared. When Anantarya went to the temple in the evening, he noticed a bleeding wound on the spot where he had hit the lad! Upset, he ran out to fetch a herb, powdered it, and filled it in the 'depression' on the chin to stop the bleeding. Pleased by his service, the God ordained that the depression on the chin be filled every day with the camphor mixture.

The first call

Atop the hill, there is a temple for Varaha on the west bank of the 'swami pushkarani'. It is often said that one has to first pay respect to 'siriya thiruvadi' that is, Anjaneya, before seeking audience with Lord Rama. Similarly, it is said that whoever visits Lord Balaji at the Seven Hills must first make a visit to Varaha. This practice is believed to have been re-enforced by Ramanuja.

The Thathacharyas

It was a long walk for him every day, as he fetched water in a pot from Papanasa for daily ablutions of the God. One day, as he was carrying the water pot on his head, he felt the weight easing slowly. A surprised Tirumalai Nambi turned back only to find a hunter quenching his thirst through a hole in the pot made with his arrow. When he chided the hunter for doing what he did especially since the water was meant for the service of God, he said, "O, Grandfather, don't worry. Little way down, there is a holy pool. You can carry water from there," so saying, he led the Tirumalai Nambi to Akasaganga, which "is the holy Ganga water itself", and disappeared. Since then, Akasaganga became the water-fetching point for the Nambi. Since God himself addressed him "O,

Grandfather," the term "Tatarya" was added to him, and his descendants came to be known as "Tataryas" or "Thathacharyas".

Resident rules

Often times, one wonders how the authorities at Tirumala manage such a huge crowd of devotees. The order at the hill temple never ceases to surprise a visitor. A peep into history, however, will give a clue or two on how it is managed. Ramanuja, perhaps, had the foresight to anticipate the modern day demands, nay pressures, on the God at the Seven Hills! It was he who had laid down very many years ago that those who are engaged in the immediate service of the God alone should reside on the hill.

Again, it was he who had said that residents and visitors alike should eat only the food offered by the temple after the service was over. May be the concept of "annadhanam centre" has its roots in Ramanuja's regulations.

They also serve

The voice against cruelty to birds and animals has been getting louder these days. This campaign has been there even in former times.

Rules for residents at Tirumala clearly prescribe that birds/animals should not be killed in the hill area. These creatures too are devoted to the Lord. Hence, they should not be harmed, so said Ramanuja.

Getting out of a spot

How come a Nrisimha shrine within the inner sanctum of the temple at Tirumala? When Vishnu granted Sankara his prayer, efforts were made to build a Siva temple on the spot where he performed his penance. This was opposed on the ground that Lord Vishnu himself had allotted to Siva a place at the foot of the hill on the banks of Kapila Tirtha. Anticipating future troubles, it was decided to have shrine for Nrisimha within the temple premises. But why a Nrisimha shrine? Lord Nrisimha has a fearsome countenance. Having him there, it was felt, would deter any fresh claims to the spot!

(The author is Deputy Business Editor, The Hindu)

Kapila Theertham in Tirupati where a Shiva temple is located



WEIGHING YOUR WORRIES AWAY

Devotees weigh themselves against rice, jaggery, sugar candy and wheat

C. Guruprasad Shukla

Thulabaram is a noble practice followed by devotees at the hill temple of Lord Venkateswara in fulfilment of their vows. The practice is in vogue from time immemorial. Devotees attach immense importance to Thulabaram which they believe is the perfect mode of expressing their gratitude towards the presiding deity.

Generally the vow for Thulabaram is undertaken by childless couples, devotees suffering from chronic ailments and by those targeting major accomplishments in their life. No sooner their prayers are heard devotees throng the hill temple for the darshan of the deity in fulfilment of their prayers.

The list of VIPs who have offered Thulabaram at the hill temple is very long.

It includes several distinguished personalities such as Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa, actor Rajinikanth, Union Ministers Sushil Kumar Shinde,



Pallam Raju and several other luminaries.

Devotees who pray for Thulabaram in fulfilment of their vows sit on one side of the huge scale (permanently fixed in the open space available on the eastern side at the entrance of the Ranganayakula mandapam inside the main temple complex) and weigh themselves against rice, sugar candy, wheat, jaggery and other such commodities generally used in the preparation of prasadam of the Lord inside the Potu (temple kitchen). They later donate such weighed commodities to the hill temple in fulfilment of their vows.

Over time, the TTD has made the system much easier and devotees no longer need to ferry rice or sugar bags into the temple.

Under the new system, the devotees can simply deposit cash equivalent to the cost of commodities as prayed (in accordance to their weight) either with the Indian Bank or Syndicate Bank at Tirumala. They transfer the amount to the temple accounts.



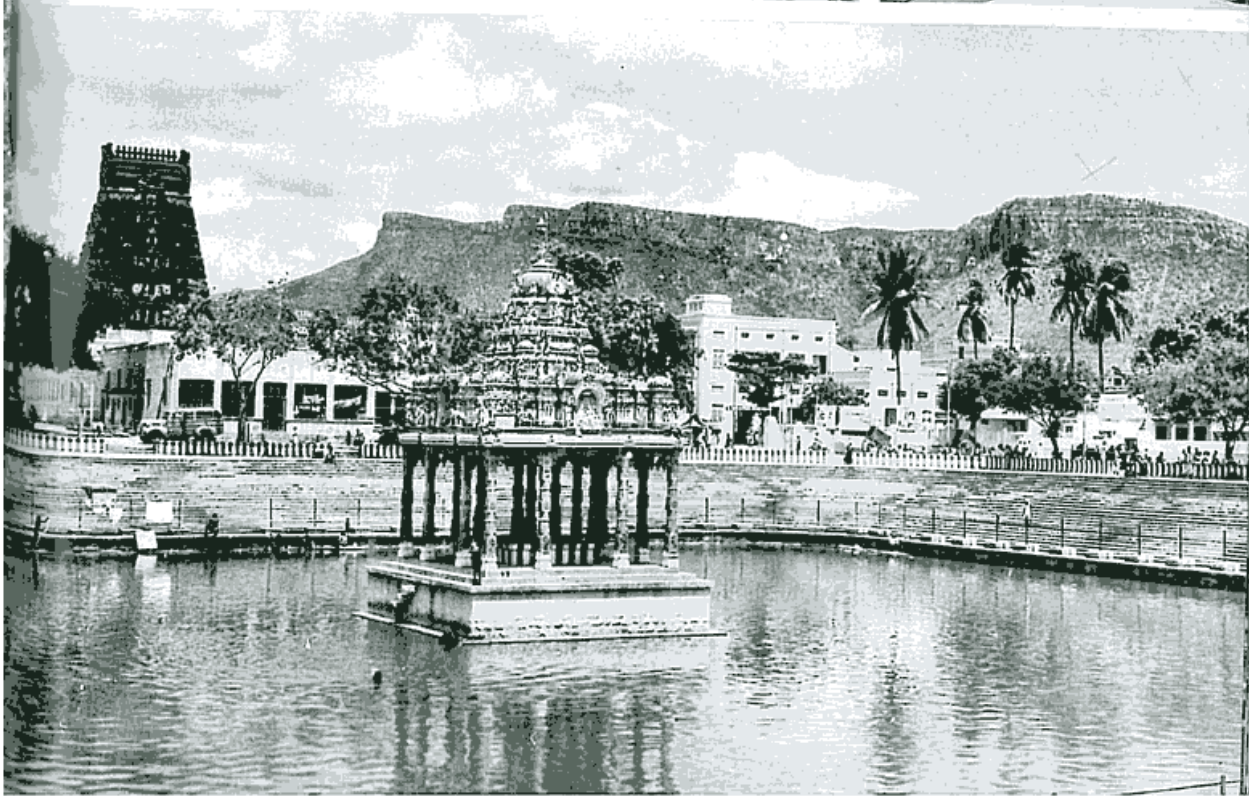
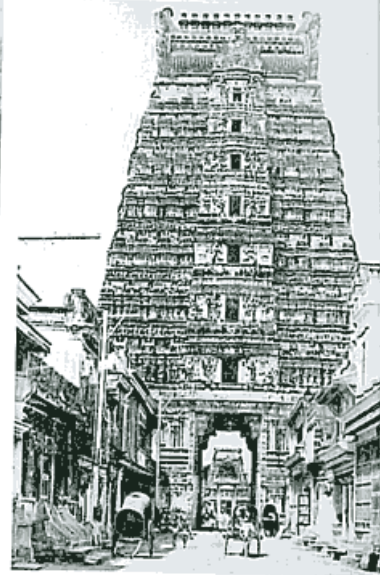
The vegetables for the Nitya Anadhanam scheme are donated on ongoing basis by nine donors from different places in south India

SR.VARI BRAHMOTSAVAM

Open queue fires and footpath without a roof

IMAGES FROM THE PAST



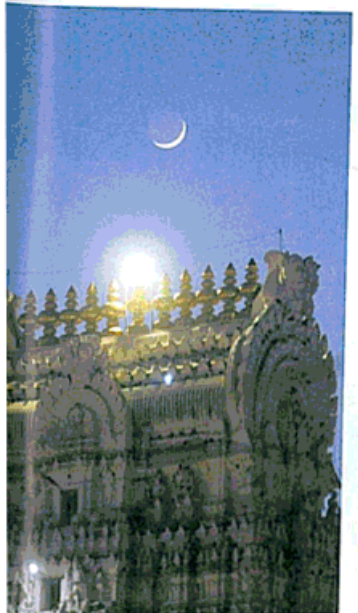


SRIVARI BRAHMOTSAVAM

The golden vimana has a special place in devotees' hearts

TOWERING INTO THE SKY

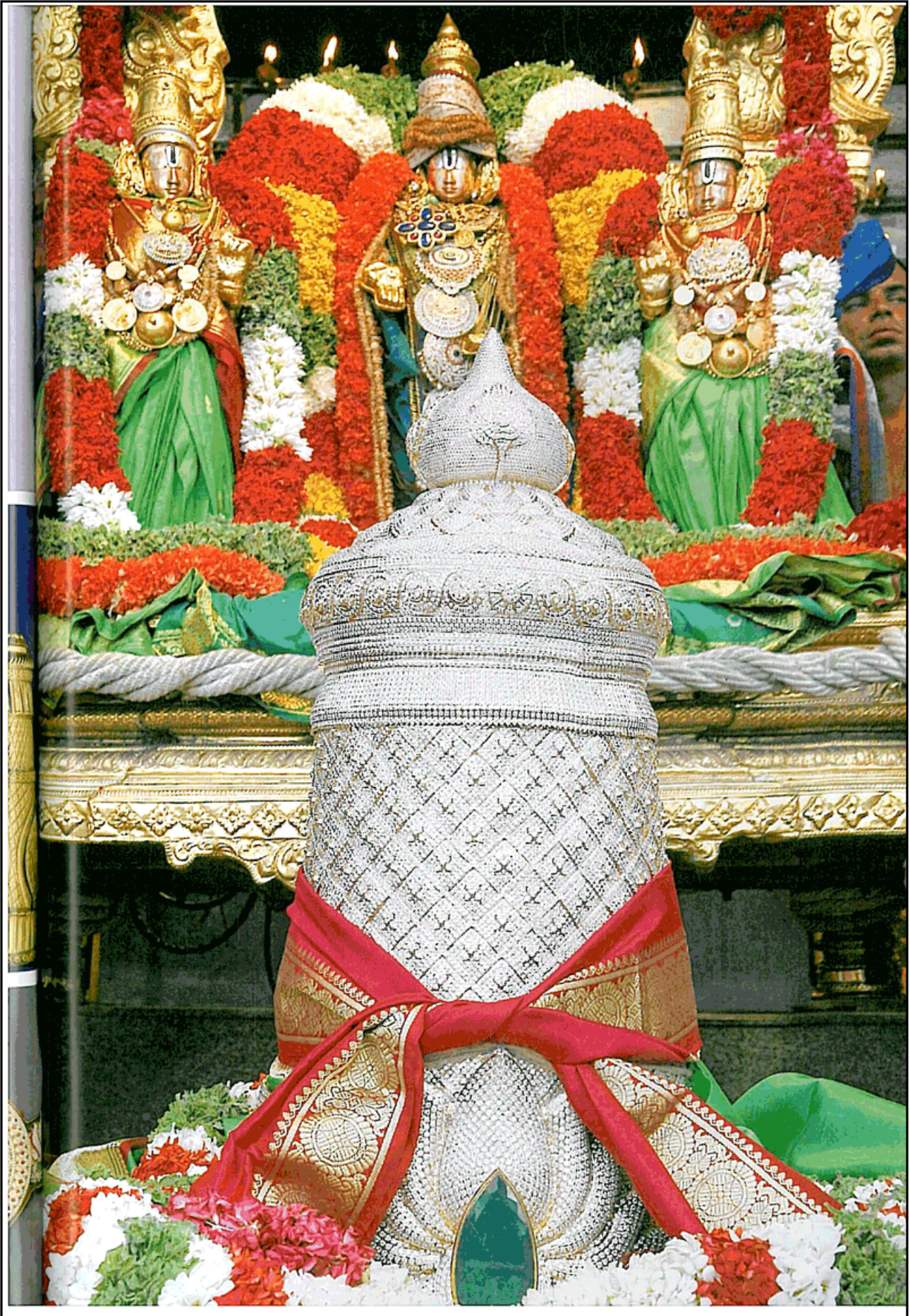




They range from plain gold to crowns studded with precious stones

A SELECTION OF CROWNS



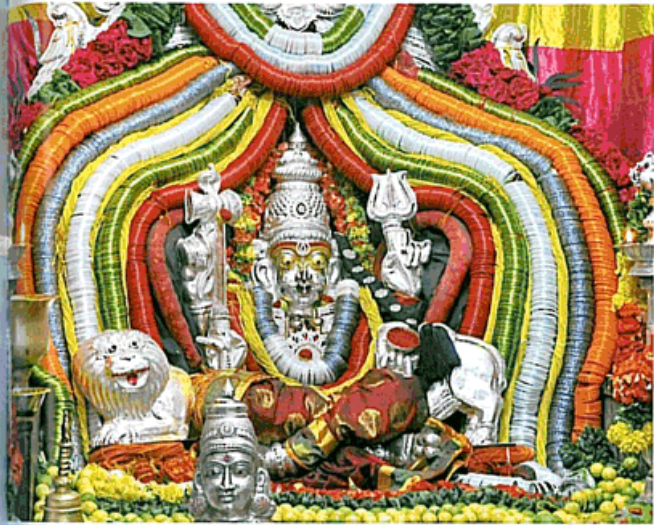
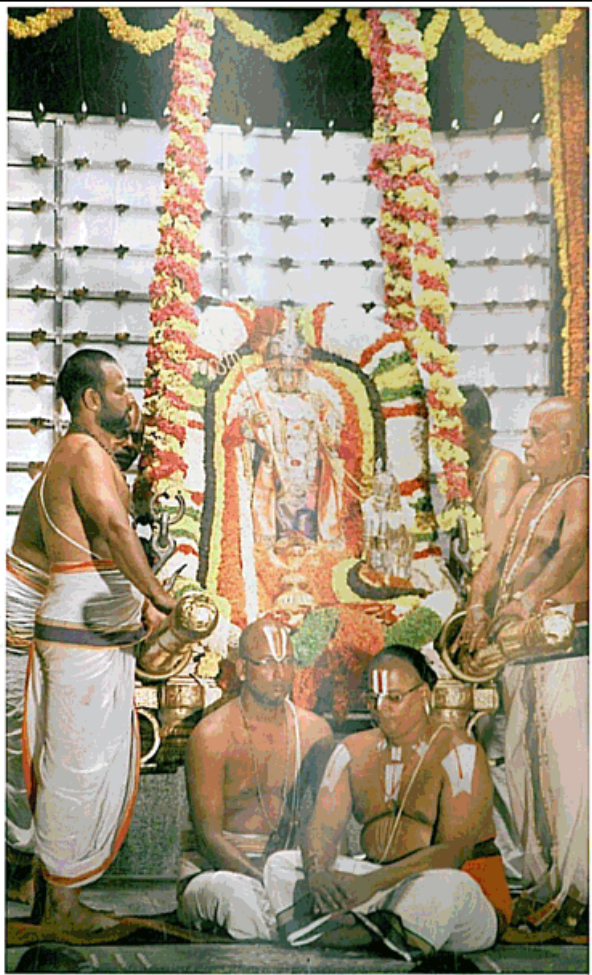
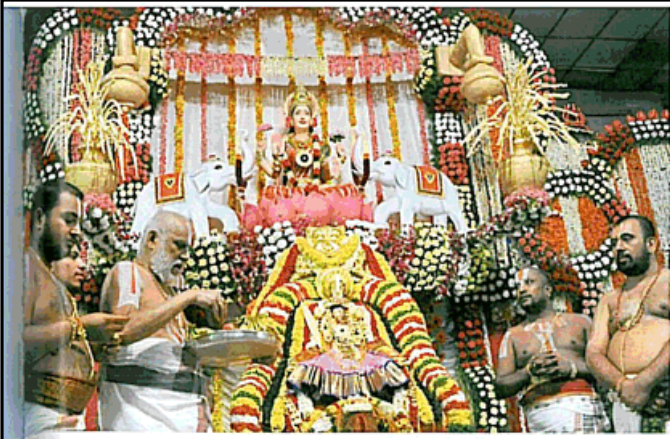


SRIVARI BRAHMOTSAVAM

The Lord and his abode in vibrant hues of colour and light

FESTIVAL TIME IS FULL OF COLOUR







SRIVARI BRAHMOTSAVAM

Rocks shaped like Garuda's nose and waterfalls that are sacred

NATURE IN ALL ITS GLORY



