Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION
Pilgrimage is an institutionalized journey by individuals or groups to a holy place. Pilgrimages have played an important role in most religions since ancient times. Pilgrims hope to obtain benefits both materialistic and spiritualistic ranging from bodily cures, prosperity, and progeny to peace of mind and finally salvation. They may go in a spirit of penance for absolving from sin or ingratitude and with unstint devotion. Mixed with these, religious motives may be desire, novelty and companionship. Pilgrimage is a divine journey from the material world to spiritual world. Pilgrimages are based on the belief that a deity or saint can best be approached in a locality with which he was physically associated. Thus pilgrims travel long distances, and have often meet with hardship and risks, to reach a shrine of a holy person or some other holy object.

The concept of pilgrimage is directly linked with that of religion. It exists in all major religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islamism, Christianity etc. It is a human phenomenon and its meaning may vary widely within the canonical structure of each religion. Religion forms an important and a major aspect of Hindus in India. In Hinduism, the institution of pilgrimage to holy places is an ancient and continuing religious tradition. The nature of Hindu pilgrimage literally means undertaking journey to river fords, mountains and hills. In Hindu religion, the common term used for pilgrimage is 'Tirtha-yathra', which does mean not only the physical act of visiting the holy and sacred places but also implies to the mental and moral aspects of human beings.

Among Hindus, religion provides them the basis of pilgrimage by offering the reward of purification of the soul and attainment of objects related to the problem and existence.

Regarding the origin and development of pilgrimage, there are varied opinions and one has to trace back to the early phase of Hindu cultural traditions. Its antiquity is evidenced both by Brahminical and Buddhist literature. The nature and spread of the pilgrimage is found in the Rig-veda where it has been suggested that in order to clean 'evil' or 'sin', people used to undertake journey to the sacred rivers for
purification and redemption from sin. Today, pilgrimage has the same ritualistic content as that of the Vedic period.

The 'Puranas' and 'Upa-puranas' are the main sources of information on pilgrimage. The 'Tirthasthala', the place of pilgrimage and Kshetra-mahatvam, the importance of the centre of pilgrimage are the two important parts of the Puranas dealing in great detail with the efficacy of pilgrimage and the righteous way of life, a pilgrim is required to lead during Tirtha-Yatra (pilgrimage).

Bhardwaj describes the motives of pilgrimage under two categories. First, there is commitment or vow to the duty whose blessing is sought for the solution of a problem or desire with which the pilgrim is afflicted with. Here there may be improvement of such rites as the first one is to hair cut of a male child or expiation for a ritual impurity that an individual may have acquired. The second motive is to earn religious merit, which may include a holy bath, sight of a deity, or visiting holy places.

In India, the sacred centres generate a complex network of socio-cultural and religious elements regulating the Hindu population. The number of Hindu sanctuaries in India is so large in number and the practice of pilgrimage is so popular that the whole of India can be regarded as large sacred 'Kshetra', in which sacred temples are organized into a system of pilgrimage centre of varied importance. In Hindu India, the pilgrimage is treated as an important socio-cultural and economic dimension of Indian civilization. It is essentially a religious phenomenon. The tradition of pilgrimage, the Tirtha Yatra seems to be as old as the Indian society. It varies from one place to another in India and still the sacred centre of pilgrimage is one of the main unifying forces in Hinduism. Innumerable sacred centres spread all over India which can be taken together as a system having varying degree of socio-religious feature. The place of pilgrimage of several levels, viz., at all India level, regional and local levels have their corresponding pilgrim field for their interactions among themselves in India.

In India, the sacred centres have exerted a powerful pull on believers beginning from the most ancient civilization to the present time. The sacred centres of India Patronised by different sects are Tirumala, Tirupati, Puri, Dwarka, Prayag.
Kashi, Kanchi, Ayodhya, Madhura, Ujjain, Nasik, Gahauhati, Simhachalam, Sri Sailam, Sri Rangapatnam, Dharmastalam, Madurai, etc., which are well known by almost all sections of the Hindu society. In Hinduism, there is no caste and sex restriction for undertaking pilgrimage at different sacred centres. Hence, pilgrimage centres, belonging to different sects and traditions, are well distributed in India, which ultimately strengthen the national solidarity both at the textual and contextual levels. The pilgrimage rules are liberal and democratic in nature. So Hindu pilgrimage is an indigenous institution and the most popular religious practice among Hindus today. Pilgrimage is a sacred act. "The practice of pilgrimage with its ancient and diversifying origins as well as its description and different references in the sacred texts and other allied literature, continued to be popular among the Hindus. Gradually, the institution of pilgrimage becomes more popular, and more people now visit sacred centres (sacred places) than ever before in the history of India."

1.1. Pilgrimage to Tirumala and Tirupati

Lord of Tirumala is all pervading Lord of the entire universe. A large number of devotees, daily an average of 60,000, visit the sacred shrine of Sri Venkateswara to worship Him.

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) is in turn dedicated itself to serving these devotees by providing facilities for darshan, accommodation, medical care, transportation, free food, health and sanitation, and security for sevas and utsavams. The main aim of the TTD is to improve these facilities for making the pilgrimage a happy spiritual and memorable experience most satisfactorily.

Tirumala is a well-known place of pilgrimage in south India and Tirupati an important centre of pilgrimage of southern India to which a large number of pilgrims come from all over the India and even from abroad as well year in and year out.

Generally people of all walk come to Tirumala on pilgrimage at least once during their life time. Tirumala is a famous pilgrim centre in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh State, South India. It has a number of ancient and sacred temples, tanks (Tirthams) and an attractive garden like Nandana Vanam and forest. Tirumala Tirupati is a famous Tirtha (place of pilgrimage) as far the Tirtha-yatras are
The presence of temple of Lord Venkateswara attracts innumerable number of Hindu pilgrims.

The sacred seat of Lord Venkateswara is in continuous contact with a whole lot of pilgrims and tourists who come from different parts of the country. This sacred place of Lord serves the local, regional and the entire Hindu universe through sacred activities. It is a meeting place for different kinds of people and traditions, of castes and sects, of classes and status and thus, it nourishes a sense of unity. It is a place where exchange of ideas, ways of life and traditions existing as well.

Tirupati

Tirupati's uniqueness of being the most sacred place of pilgrimage in India rests with its fame and popularity transcending the state boundaries. It has become a symbol of dharma integrates the pilgrims spiritually and culturally through out a year. Tirupati is located on the latitude of 13° - 14°N, longitude of 79°-25°E and at a height of 500 feet above the mean sea level. It is situated on the northern bank of the river Swarnamuki in Chittoor, the southern most district of Andhra Pradesh state.

Apart from being a pilgrim town, Tirupati is an important centre for higher education in the Rayalaseema region, as it is the seat of Sri Venkateswara University which was established on 2nd September 1954. There are a number of technical and non-technical, medical and other professional educational institutions, which provide educational facilities to the students of all types. The functional characteristics of Tirupati town can be described as educational, commercial and cultural etc., in that order. In a way it can be said that the main stay of the economy of the town is the money generated from the pilgrims in several ways.

Pilgrims

A person who journeys to a holy place (sacred) for religious reasons is called Pilgrim. Hindu pilgrims keep more or less their traditions and social and cultural customs intact from generation to generation. Many types of pilgrims like the local pilgrims, regional pilgrims, national pilgrims, non-Hindu pilgrims from abroad come to Tirupati. The pilgrims who come within the district i.e., Chittoor district to visit Tirumala Tirupati are generally local pilgrims.
The pilgrims who are coming to Tirumala Tirupati to visit Lord Venkateswara from other districts of Andhra Pradesh are regional pilgrims.

The pilgrims coming to Tirupati from other States of India are national pilgrims. The pilgrims of non-Hindu religions visit Tirumala Tirupati as well.

1.2. Information

The term ‘information’ has been derived from two Latin words, ‘formation’ and ‘forma’, which imply giving shape to some thing and of forming a pattern. Information refers to fact, news, data, intelligence and knowledge, which can be used, transferred and communicated. It is a stimulus, which is received through our senses, or it is the product of brain in action or thought.

Information plays a key role in economic, social and cultural realms of society. It is much important in speedily transforming society and a vital resource and input in the overall development and growth of a country.

The supply of correct and reliable information at the right time to the right person helps in minimizing wastage of resources and avoids duplication of work. It is regarded as resource of resource, so information plays a vital role in:

i) Growth of knowledge and wisdom,
ii) Research and innovation,
iii) Development and design,
iv) Production and marketing,
v) Decision making and management and
vi) Education and training.

Information is the message, which can be transmitted between individuals. It is also power. The amount of information required varies from person to person, time to time and from place to place.

1.2.1 Information – Definitions

Information, in the words of Spera, “is the stimulus which we perceive through our senses. This information may be a single isolated fact or it may be whole
cluster of facts; but still it is a unit, a unit of thought. It can have any dimensions. It is that intellectual entity which we receive, the building block of knowledge".6

The simple meaning of information in a restricted sense is a sensible statement, opinion, fact, concept of ideas or an association of statements, opinions or ideas.

One must remember that information has no value until it is used. The work of scientists, technologists, researchers, academics, managers et al., necessitates effective transfer of information. In order to provide channels for the spread of information, society creates special institutions.7

UNESCO’s recent publication ‘World Information Report 1997/98’ presents a realistic view of information provision as it is found throughout the world today and as it is being transformed by the technological, social and political development of tomorrow.8

Information is the outcome of the human brain in action and may be abstract or concrete, e.g., love, fear, book, or pen. When an individual begins to think, a variety of images and sensations flash through his mind.

According to Bell “information is news, facts, statistics, reports, legislation, tax codes, judicial decisions, resolutions and the like”.9

Rajan says that, “no universally accepted definition of information has yet crystallized, perhaps it will never be crystallized”.10

Otten and Debons state that “information is a fundamental phenomenon like energy on which operations can be performed. They further view that all information processing operations can be performed by digital computers”.11

Davis defines information as “data that has been processed into a form that is meaningful to the recipient and is of real perceived value in current or prospective decision”.12
Webster's Third New International Dictionary gives the meaning to information "as the communication or reception of knowledge or intelligence, something obtained or received through informing; the process by which the form of object of knowledge is impressed upon the apprehending mind so as to bring about the status of knowing".\(^\text{13}\)

Fairthorne says that 'information is a metaphorical designation for a porous mass of ill-defined different activities and phenomena'.\(^\text{14}\)

Again, he defines "information as the name of some stuff. This substance is squeezed from books like water from sponge and can be stored and pumped around".\(^\text{15}\)

Kent describes that "information is the feed stock for knowledge in an idea world of unimpeded flow of information amongst individuals of equal capacity to process the information into knowledge. There would be no advantage to be gained by any individual or group as compared with another by possession of information".\(^\text{16}\)

Hence, information can be defined as a fact (s) or data that has been processed into a form that is meaningful to the recipient and is of real perceived value in current or prospective decision.

1.2.2 Types of information

Information can be categorised on the basis of its use and purpose for which it is used. Shera has categorized information into six types as under:

i) Conceptual information: It relates to ideas, theories and hypotheses about the relationship which exists among the variables in the area of problems.

ii) Empirical information: It relates to data of experience of research which may drawn from oneself or communication from others.

iii) Procedural information: It is the data of investigation which are obtained, manipulated and derived from scientific attitude.

iv) Stimulating information: It is a type of information which is motivated by oneself or environmentally derived.
v) **Policy information**: This type of information is focused on the decision making process, and

vi) **Directive information**: It is used for co-ordination and for enabling effective group activity.\(^\text{17}\)

### 1.2.3 Nature of Information

Information is as varied as human motives in general. The following are some of the varied forms of information:

i) **Technical information**: This type of information emanates from research and development carried out by various research institutes including universities. It is a product of innovation and invention. It adds to the existing knowledge. This kind of information is required by researchers, scientists, producers and students.

ii) **Commercial information**: Commercial information is the information pertaining to products, marketing, management, import and export, etc. This kind of information aims at to maximize profits.

iii) **Social information**: Social information encompasses traditional information. It enhances the quality of life of the people considerably.

iv) **Administrative information**: The coming together of people in larger group creates a need for administrative information. It contains information about the work environment, its rules, regulations, policies and decisions of the administration.

v) **Occupational information**: It is a kind of information which is associated with the occupation of each citizen engaged in, such as the work produces whether it is manual, clerical, technological, supervisory, managerial, educational, etc.

### 1.2.4 Characteristics of information

Cleveland has outlined seven characteristics of information:

1) **Human**: Information is the outcome of activity in human brain. Hence, it is the human beings who stimulate or conceive information by interaction, observation and experience.
2) **Expandable:** Information tends to expand as it is used. It is infinite and unlimited. There are no boundaries to it except those set up by human capabilities. Information spreads through periodicals, books, television and other media.

3) **Information is shareable:** Information by nature cannot give rise to exchange transaction, only to sharing, says communication theorist 'Colin Cherry'. Information cannot be exchanged but can be shared. Information if shared gives rise to more information. The use of information generates in its turn, new information. The usage increases its value.

4) **Compressible:** Information is compressible both systematically and semantically. It can be put into different formats so as to enable easy and effective transfer from generation to use.

5) **Transportable:** Information has to be passed on or to be communicated from one place to another to be useful.

6) **Diffusive:** Information tends to diffuse, the more it diffuses, the more it creates new information. Information reproduces itself rather than consumed through use, and

7) **Substitutable:** Information can replace capital, labour and physical material.

### 1.2.5 Value of Information

Information is an essential component in our day-to-day activities. It is needed for planning, decision making, research, education and recreation. In every profession, it is essential to update the knowledge of the field concerned. Information as the communicated knowledge is required to understand and react rationally on the personnel, environmental, national and international constitutions, as well as to take right decision at the right time. Productive information is so essential for socialization, motivation, cultural promotion, social or national integration and attain welfare state or true democracy.

In the present age of information, information is continued to be a resource, a product and they are by a need. The right to information should be considered one of the fundamental rights of human beings.
Subject experts have described information as the fifth need of man ranking after air, water, food and shelter. In view of the vital role played by information in daily life, it should be considered as the first need in terms of survival. This is because, the information about the availability of food, shelter, transport, protection of territory, ensuring security and success etc., are primarily or organic importance. Without this information, it is difficult to go through the challenging process of life.

Information is a socio-economic product. Organization, generation, transfer and use of information are helpful in shaping the socio-economic development of any nation. Planners, policy-makers and people in power who have to make decisions affecting large sections of society and realizing that information is the basis of gainful decisions; governments appreciate the concept of information being an instrument of social change, and economists have begun to consider information as a non-depleting resource and as a commodity subject to economic analysis.

It is the prime resource of meeting social, cultural and civilization and academic needs of people. It is essential for the progress of the individual and national development. This is why access to right kind of information or possession of correct and relevant information is a key to resolve the various types of problems faced by the individuals. Information sensitizes and enhances the problem solving capacity of the individual and the nation as well.

Nowadays information is considered as an important factor for the development of any society. Only those societies and countries of the world are really developing which generate, apply and disseminate new information on existing knowledge for the religious, cultural, socio-economic and educational development. If a country is considered a developed country, means its people generate, utilize and transfer the information. It plays a crucial role in the advancement of existing knowledge and transfer of technology. It is a direct input to the process of generation of new information. It is an input to the process of production of commodities and services. It is one of several basic resources that are needed and utilized by human beings for their development and prosperity.
The identification of the information factor can greatly bring an improvement in the quality of life. Without the availability of adequate information, no significant improvement in the living conditions of the people will be attainable. The information concerning health, education and culture, entertainment, housing, agriculture, manufacturing, employment, pilgrimage and sports, will certainly have a positive impact on the quality of life. This will ultimately raise the standard of living of the people.

There is no field of human activity wherein information is not a component. Whether it is research and development, business and industry, government affairs, information is processed, stored, retrieved and disseminated for communication. Indeed the effectiveness of performance in all these spheres of activity depends largely upon the availability of information at the right time in adequate quality and quantity. All human activities result in the creation of information and they are mostly recorded/communicated through various media.

Information needs is a pre-requisite to design and development of information systems to provide need-based information services to the users of information. It has been a topic of great concern and interest to information professionals that how people seek, retrieve and prefer to use the information.

Information generation, dissemination, transfer and communication take place among people through diverse channels and media, in a variety of contexts and environments. Hence, a fairly accurate assessment of information needs of users has to be made because this will alone form the primary basis for all information activities.

1.3 Information needs

Information is an important factor in any society, be it for a profession or for any other reason. According to Turner information is a key resource that can bring about change and improvement in the society.

Rawley and Turner defined information needs as any piece of information, recorded as well as unrecorded that a scholar may need (as distinct from want, demand and use) in connection with his study, teaching and research activities.
User studies in library and information science are based on the premise that effective library services must begin with a clear understanding of the actual needs of information users.

Sairti\textsuperscript{23} agreed that in an era of continuous technological developments in conjunction with information overload, user studies continue to be a vital tool enabling information use and delivery. Day-to-day contact with users provide some kind of understanding, but for deeper insight into the information needs, more formal studies are required.

Brittain\textsuperscript{24} argued that information needs varies from function to function, from environment to environment, from discipline to discipline and even from age to age. While Rees and Schultz\textsuperscript{25} noted that information needs vary in relation to the subject fields of their users, educational backgrounds, amount of experience and function performed. The study of information needs and gathering behaviour dates back to 1948, with the paper presented by Bernal\textsuperscript{26} at the Royal Society's Conference on Scientific Information. The number of studies carried out in the social sciences and humanities compared to studies on scientists, information uses and needs is trivial, both absolutely (Hopkin\textsuperscript{27}) and comparatively (Lime\textsuperscript{28}).

The information handling activities are to be based entirely on the needs of the user. The user categories have different needs for information depending upon their functions, responsibilities and duties. The user groups include government officials, legislators, parliamentarians, industrialists, entrepreneurs, professionals, engineers, lawyers, doctors, researchers, teachers, students and entertainers, skilled workers in various sectors of production, people at the grass root level in villages and the general public. Information needs vary distinctly among these categories of users.

Every one at various times needs information of one kind or another. As the complexity in life increases, so is the need for information. Simultaneously the volume of information, variety of media, and the means of access has also increased.

Information needs may be known through the appraisal of the community. Its people and their role and characteristic features, its economic activity and occupational pattern, nature of social and cultural life are indicators from which the nature and contents of information need could be derived. It is a sound procedure to
draw information needs from an analysis and identification of the basic features of the community.

Information needs may be divided into the following categories:

1) **Social or pragmatic information needs**: Information required to cope with days-to-day life;

2) **Recreation information needs**: Information satisfying the recreational and cultural civilizational interests of an individual;

3) **Professional information needs**: Information required to operate completely within a business or professional environment; and

4) **Educational information needs**: Information required to satisfy academic requirement of an institution.

Hence, there is need to assess the information needs of pilgrim community to provide the required information by designing an appropriate information system for pilgrims.

1.3.1 Role of Information in Social development

The social development of a nation depends upon the information system because knowledge incentive, knowledge generating and knowledge based information systems are the desired goals of every society and information is a dominant factor for imparting knowledge.

The role of information in social development is as follows:

1. Information is a social resource and it is a social right. It gives people the freedom of expression;

2. It helps to achieve the objectives of social awareness, stimulates people for productive purposes and integrates all persons and their groups together;

3. The unequal distribution of information divides the society into information rich and information poor and it can become a major obstacle in balanced national development; and

4. Society can grow with high technology only if supported by effective information services:
The information needs of society for its development may include:

1. Information about social welfare programmes, activities and schemes;
2. Information about social order, law and social justice;
3. Information about public health and health facilities;
4. Information about trends in population, political and economic situation;
5. Information about social problems like AIDS, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, corruption, dowry system, poverty, etc.;
6. Information about wealth and economic securities; and
7. Information about national defence system, national developmental plans, educational system, cultural heritage and anthropology, public administration, etc.  

All the above information and additional information related to the society can be provided to all only with the help of efficient, effective and prompt information services through libraries, information centres and documentation centres. The major social factors responsible for overall social development include the following:

1. Educational development;
2. Cultural development; and
3. Human development.

1.3.2 Role of information in educational development

The development of educational system is closely related with the useful library system. Today, educational system is information based and library oriented. The speedy and timely access to information for students, teachers, researchers and scientists is very essential part of the educational system and information services of library system. The information services of library help raise educational standards, and the library and information oriented education helps for educational as well as national development.
The information needs of education may include as following:

1. Information about library and research facilities;
2. Information about various courses of study;
3. Information about scholarships and fellowships;
4. Information about minimum qualifications for admission;
5. Information about list of colleges, universities, schools, etc.;
6. Information about Distance Education programme, Continuing Education, Adult Education, Physical Education and Vocational Education etc.
7. Information about languages and literature; and
8. Information about each subject.

All above information related with educational system can be provided by efficient information services. Such information services help the teachers and students to develop themselves, which ultimately develops the educational system and lead into social development. It is discussed in short as below:

Role of information for development of teachers

1. Information helps teacher to be a good consultant to offer good knowledge;
2. Information helps the teacher to be a good evaluator to make education system more effective;
3. Information helps teacher to be knowledgeable and earn more increments on the basis of the academic work which contributes towards development of education;
4. Information helps the teacher to be employed the least amount of words for satisfying the student;
5. Information helps teacher write articles and seminar/conference papers on various subjects with new trends, which help others to find depths in the study;
6. Information helps the planner in educational field to:
   a) Frame new syllabus,
   b) Restructure the educational process, and
   c) Implement continuous innovations.30
Role of information for development of students

Knowledge is power and "students gain knowledge with the help of various information sources. It helps students for their own as well as educational development in the following way:

1. The accurate and precise information increases the confidence of students in the dynamism for the best study;
2. Information is a source of motivation to students, which makes them full of energy, creativity and enthusiasm,
3. The balanced growth of personality of a student is possible in the competitive world though correct knowledge supported by accurate information;
4. Information helps to refresh and update knowledge of both students and teachers, and
5. Information helps to broaden the attitudes of students in related fields, which offers better satisfaction.

1.3.3 Role of information in cultural development

Information provides access to the history and records of the cultural heritage of nation. Information services are an effective source of collection, conservation and dissemination of cultural heritage.

As a part of cultural heritage, libraries provide information about the following factors:

1. The social traditions and beliefs in society;
2. The arts-architecture, sculpture, ancient temples, paintings;
3. The social customs;
4. Information about rituals and festivals;
5. Information about gods and goddesses;
6. Information about dresses and apparels dances in different regions of the country;
7. Information about ancient musical instruments, weapons etc;
8. Information about records of human thoughts and ideas and expression of their creative imagination;
9. Information about religious places, historical places and events; and
10. Information about museums, art galleries, archeological things and places etc.

In the words of Banjo Gboyega – the role of libraries and information services for culture development is that it:

1. Promotes awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of arts, scientific achievements and innovation;
2. Provides access to cultural expressions of all performing arts;
3. Foster intercultural dialogue and favouring cultural diversity; and
4. Support the oral tradition.32

Thus, information services help for cultural development as a tool of cultural diffusion.

Information contained in book form or any other form helps to transmit the culture from one generation to the next. Culture is related with the conservation of past and is possible only when it keeps the record of past in written and as such, the written record becomes a source of information about culture which can be communicated with others. Thus, the information recorded becomes a source for its further development.

1.3.4 Role of information in human development

A society is a group of individuals and so, an individual development results in social development. The aim of library and information service is not only the improvement of the individual but also the improvement of society of which the individual is a part and parcel.

The informational requirements of women for their development may deal with child care, nutritional women development schemes, birth-control methods, pregnancy, training courses in baking, interior decoration, embroidery and all other various arts and crafts. Whereas, men may require information for their development regarding etiquette and manners at public place, child development, family management, entrepreneurship, physical exercise and fitness, sports and games, national development projects, commerce, industries, etc. If the required information is provided at right time to people, it will help them develop. The information stored in libraries is so for the purpose of reading.
1.3.5 Information needs of pilgrims

Information has great value in the present day information based society. It plays an important role in today's complex economic, social and cultural environment. It is required in every human sphere of activity. A homemaker (housewife) requires it on the availability and the price of house hold items, a pilgrim needs information on accommodation, transportation, timing of darshanam, medical aid, health and sanitation, sevas and utsavams, sudarshan token/ biometric system, water facilities, kalyanakatta, free meals, TTD press, kalyanamandapams, vigilance and security, publicity and propaganda, DPP and Annamacharya project programmes, education facilities, travel and tourism, TTD local temples, gardens, zoo and forest departments and so on. If the required information is provided to pilgrims at the right time, they will take right decisions to avail of themselves. It involves the movement of the people within their own country known as pilgrimage (Domestic tourism).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Numerous sacred places distributed in various parts of India to attract millions of pilgrims. Pilgrims are those who make journeys to the sacred place(s) as an act of religious devotion. Some places draw pilgrims from all over the country while others largely from neighbouring villages. Religion provides the basis of pilgrimage by offering the reward of purification of soul and the attainment of objects related to the problem of mundane existence from the most ancient civilizations to the present time. Sacred centres have exerted a mystical power on the believers.

In ancient times, the institution of pilgrimage was an important part human life. People practised it with full devotion, faith and courage and faced a lot of difficulties during their pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is considered a sacred act. It is open to all. It is believed that there is a sacred aim with certain specific objects behind it to fulfil the desire of obtaining 'punya' (virtue) and to get rid of 'papa' (sin) – finally emancipation of oneself. Pilgrimage is a source of income to government and it generates employment too.
Nowadays it is possible for a large number of individuals to undertake pilgrimage more conveniently due to modern means of mass transportation, adequate food and accommodation facilities and provision of lot of information through both mass and electronic media.

Most of our sacred places (holy places) and shrines are located on hills, mountains, sea shores or cities. The historically rich temples of Andhra Pradesh are a major attraction for pilgrims. Tirupati is a pilgrimage centre of great significance, visited by crores of pilgrims throughout the year. Lord Venkateswara or Balaji in Tirumala is the presiding deity. The temple is located on the range of Eastern Ghats called Seshachala Mountain and it is said to be the richest temple in India. Tirumala is a vibrant cultural and philanthropic institution with a hoary past.

Today crores of people from different parts of India and abroad are visiting Tirumala Tirupati to have a darshan of Lord Venkateswara. Not only Hindus but also people belonging to other faiths from all over the world visit to Tirumala Tirupati to have darshan of Lord Venkateswara. For their comfortable pilgrimage, they require information regarding transportation, food, accommodation, tourist places, darshan timings, various sevas and utsavams performed to the Lord Venkateswara and the like.

Though TTD is providing essential information to pilgrims, it is not yet reaching them in an effective way. The pilgrims are not well aware of facilities and services provided by TTD and nor utilizing them to the maximum extent. It may be due to many factors including ignorance, illiteracy, lack of proper guidance, unavailability of the required information and language barriers. The existing 78 TTD information centres and 20 Tourism information centres located in different places are inadequate to provide the required information to pilgrims. The public libraries are also unable to provide the required information to them. So there is a need to revamp existing system and develop an online information system which could be placed in public libraries, TTD information centres and Tourism information centres to disseminate the required information to all interested people in the society.
People have the right to acquire information. If such information is not provided, the consequences can easily be unimaginable. Information has great value in the present day information society. It plays an important role in today's complex socio-economic and cultural environment and it is required in every human sphere of activity. If such information is provided to pilgrims at the right time, they will save time and money; get comfortable darshan and accommodation; and take proper decisions related to their trip to Tirumala.

Pilgrims require information for planning their pilgrimage to reduce the cost of it. Hence, it is essential to provide the required information to them. A study on their information needs is useful to design a better information system to pilgrims.

Many studies were conducted on information needs of scientists, engineers, teachers, research scholars, students, journalists, farmers, doctors and industrialists, legal professionals, home-makers (housewives), nurses and general public. No study has been so far undertaken on the information needs of pilgrims. Hence, the present study entitled 'Information needs of pilgrims visiting Tirumala Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh: A Survey' has been undertaken. It aims to survey the TTD information needs of pilgrims, the satisfaction of the pilgrims with regard to TTD and non-TTD information sources and services, awareness of different TTD programmes, the information channels from which they obtain information and obstacles in getting it. The study has also been undertaken to suggest effective channels to provide TTD information to pilgrims, and the role of TTD administrative officers and managers of TTD information centres in the provision of facilities and services to the pilgrims.
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