Chapter-VII

Socio-ritual, cultural and economic profiles of pilgrims

During field-work I explored the interrelationships between religious beliefs and economic exchanges. Here, religion affects economic motives of large sections of Indian pilgrims. The influence of religion on man's economic and social life specially in this temple town cannot be ignored. By prohibiting certain activities and restricting others the injunctions of religion regulate the economic activities of individuals as well as groups.

Belief in the possibility of improvement of an individual's social or spiritual may also serve to spur on economic activity such as giving donations, building dharmsalas
for pilgrims stay, etc. The respondents, who were interviewed included from the following states:

1. MAHARASHTRA: They usually come from the remote-villages of this state to Srisailam. A considerable proportion of them are well-connected with this sacred-economy. However, 15 per cent of urban, 24 per cent of rural of these pilgrims prefer to have spiritual-contact with the sacred-complexes here. Traditionally, the Marathas-pilgrims participation is good along with their income, expenditure-pattern, region, length of stay (for a few days), and purpose of visit is likely to get a male-child or success in a court-case or liberating from evil-spirits or total-recovery of illness. Lingayat's-ordination of their 'regional-characters' in
ritual-exchange may bomarzngg and lead to interaction with other pilgrims from India for religiously pursued at all economic-levels with special reference to festivals and fairs here. The respondents were also asked to identify a particular object or needed agricultural-implements, which they brought at this sacred-place to carry it with them. The remaining respondents have clearly stated them as an important in exchanging their spiritual-cultural along with materialistic-economic conditions. A little more than 3 per cent interrelated them and has adversely affected 2 per cent of pilgrims from this state in our study. Very less differences are also noticed among these Maharash-trians in seeking blessings from Goddesses Brahmarambhike here.
Nearly, half of them are particular about their aspirations in maintaining interrelationships with these complexes till the end of their life-span.

2.) Kerala and Tamil Nadu: Drawing from the comparative assessments of the pilgrims from these two states, the interview-sample guide has formulated a detailed information, which has been summarized in Telugu. They treat Srisailam as a sacred-product of transitional-stage between traditional Nayanars and liberal-Saiva Gurus along with a Namboodri Brahmin-reformer, namely, the great Adi Sankara according to myths, folk-tales and legends here.

The respondents from these two states refers to this widespread diffusion, of habits, mentalities and purchasing
styles that correspond to more advanced stage in Srisailam.

Pilgrimage therefore seeks to achieve an integration of different people from these two states. It reinforce traditional features and as aberrant phenomenon of interaction. When aspirations keep rising and are guided by socio-cultural defined economic-exchanges that are matched by adequate sacred-institutional(complexes) means such inter-relational-situation at Srisailam. Their pilgrimage has gained more and respectability in socio-cultural, ritual and economic-exchanges with the very legitimacy. It is an evident from my schedules that very high percentage of pilgrims from these two states were classified as respondents according to their income, caste-background and other rituals by them here.
3.) Karnataka: Another interest from these respondents was to examine the interrelative-salience of various socio-cultural and their exchanges from an economic-point of view. It is evident among the 'Lingayats' that sacred-values are very much interrelated to religio-economic needs were predominant, followed by their long stay at mathas here. Likewise, an inspection of respondents manifests that they did reach significance level by taking 'padayatra' to Srisailam as part of their strong-faith in Lord Mallikarjuna Swamyji. It also implies that the agricultural-caste groups shared a common perceptual target with His/Her Divine Grace blessings. Analysing the schedules, it is noted that the Lingayats, who formed 7 per cent of floating-pilgrims here.
'Thirthe-yatra' by foot has been the most significant factor and is solely a projection of their sacred-aspirations and strength of their organisations as well as maths here. More than half of the pilgrims as compared to a few were found to have a Lingayat background from the above state. There were many statements in all their responses to me and each statement was provided an interesting findings here. I would like to discuss about them in the coming pages in depth.

4.) Andhra Pradesh: They give an essentials of exchange-theory and sacred-culture with their interrelationships. The study taken into account of male as well as female pilgrims ranging in age belonging to the high and low socio-economic status. A scale was utilized in my schedules
to measure these pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh on a sample
of 75 respondents. More importantly, they confine to rising
economic-motivations. The lineages between these pilgrims
and ritual-classes, nature of math's ideologies and their
interrelative-units that the pilgrims achieve in a given
mode of service-giving and service-taking from professional
cast or tribal-group here. Having looked at the 'Araya-
dhayas' (Telugu-Saivas) a researcher could ask while looking
at their sacred-phenomena, which is totally interconnected
seemingly to above sacred-complexes. Their percentage is
next to Kannadigas in dominant from other regions here. It
would appear that even the pilgrims of above states by
sacred-character in federal-principle agree that Srisailam
discussing about these aspects on the following lines:

The habit of buying and selling at fairs as well as festivals is deep-rooted among agricultural caste groups, namely, Kapus (Naidus), Reddys, Kammars (Chowdhurys) and Lingayats. They attend these fairs and festivals in large numbers and simultaneously participate in material and religio-spiritual transactions. A cow or goat brought at a sacred-fair has a special value for the peasant. It is more than a mere economic asset. It is a valued possession in the household. The buyers and sellers are also pilgrims to the temples and as such their deals have an aura of sanctity. One who cheats here is likely to incur the
Divine wrath. The dissatisfaction with the prevalent values of a caste-ridden, Brahmin-dominated society, which followed religious practices based on dead-tradition and superstition. They practised gross-discrimination against tribal-chenchus as well as lower-castes or untouchables. They were not allowed inside the temple as the down trodden. Her Holiness Akkammahadevi and the other Lingayat social-reformers of this region criticised and

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In the festival, the sacred dimension of life is recovered. The participants experience the sanctity of human-existence as a Divino-creation. At all other times there is always the danger of forgetting what is fundamental—that existence is not given by what modern men call Nature but is a creation of Others; the Gods or semi-divine beings. But in festivals the participants recover the sacred dimension of existence, by learning again how the Gods or the mythical ancestors created man and taught him the various kinds of social-behaviour and of practical-work. Mircea Eliade: The Sacred and the profane; The Nature of Religion, Harper and Row publishers., New York, 1961. pp. 89-90.
sought to reform it. They were the first, who mobilized the pilgrims of different castes against such exploitation and against an inequitable-religious faith generally. The Liggayat-social reformers were advocates of change for recognition of the principle of equality for worship at these sacred-complexes and they facilitated the entry of deprived-groups into the temples at Srisailam.

The religious, the economic and other facets of pilgrims will be seen from our discussion to also represent different-phases in the coming pages. An understanding of the social and ritual-context of pilgrims particularly from the non-Brahmins, who were the largest group numerically. They constituted a majority of incoming pilgrims annually. Although they were outside the
Brahminical-fold, yet they were well-off as owners of land or business and therefore acquired a high status. From Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, north-Karnataka, present Tamil Nadu and Kerala areas, these devotees seemed to have enjoyed and made frequent-trips to this holy-centre. One interesting fact is that Muslims as well as Christians are visiting to a much greater extent along with their Hindu-friends during the last few decades.

To-day, Lingayats as well as Brahmins strengthened their faith towards Srisailam. These caste-groups migrated from Kannadadesa and settled here as Infact, Hyder Ali as well as Tipu Sultan took the blessings of Srisailam's main-Lords according to local-folk tales. In Maharashtra-legends, when Shivaji succeeded as 'Chatrapathi' due to her Holiness Shri Brahamarambikaji blessings and then he advised all castes to go for Srisailam pilgrimage annually.
keepers of ledgers and full-time custodians of sacred-complexes. Sometimes the landowning-castes like Reddys, Kapus and Kandas along with Rajus required their services due to their religious-needs.

Exchange between temples and pilgrims: Here, the priests

role is in mediating between the temples on the one and

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the pilgrims on the other hand. For instance, now I can refer
to the priestly advice to pilgrims to conduct specific

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cf. "The pandit seeks meritorious fulfilment in life through the affirmation of family and wider-kinship obligations and through the willing acceptance of other social-bonds, which result from the pursuits of generally accepted worldly goals (artha).... He wants success in the work he does, and cares for being thought of well in his village as much as he wants to lead a happy domestic life. There is thus a continuity in the pandit's life between and the extra-domestic-domains and between what may be called the religious and secular spheres, just as there is a continuity between the home and the earth itself." 

pujas for illness, success in court-cases, even personal liberation (moksha), etc. The personal experience of these priests in the management of temple is much advisory role.

In the formal sense, pilgrim's visit to Srisailam provides income to the municipality, transport operations (private and public), temple related units like fairs and weekly-markets, dhammasalas, shops, and devasthanam itself (i.e. ritual-income). This generates economic activity, especially the redistribution of income for public or civil-facilities like roads, buses, lodges, etc. Formal exchanges lead to social exchanges such as friendships, business partnerships, family reunions, etc.
Castes and tribes interaction: The sacred-system of the Chenchus, who are the local-tribe of Srisailam. Here, the two inland-stretches are covered with thick forests, scarcely inhabited by the Chenchus, their settlements being called 'pentas'. The Chenchus have customary economic-collections levied on the pilgrims to Srisailam. These customary-collections are known as mirasis. It can be cited as a long case study to understand their reciprocity. The customary-collections are of money, a kind of levy paid to them by each pilgrim to Srisailam at the time of Mahashivaratri festival in February-March, is known as metta.

This was directly collected by the villagers at their

1. From the Census of India, 1961, Vol. II, Andhra pradesh part of Atmakur sub taluk, Srisaila-region of Kumool dist', vi, village survey monograph, No. 33, Delhi, Manager of publications.
village gate through which the pilgrims had to pass. This had its own socio-historical significance from time immemorial symbolizing **inter-community relations** and cultural contacts with the different-castes (pilgrims). Prior to 1957 every pilgrim had to go on foot. He/she needed protection and guidance from the experienced Chenchus, who were quite at home in the jungle-land. But now this need is no more.

**Interrelationships**: The functional-relationship between the tribe and visiting-pilgrims from the different-castes is characterized by an interdependence quite similar to the 'jajmani-system'. Under the system each pilgrim is expected to get certain standardized service to them here. The pilgrim family is served by these chenchus known as his or her
jajman while the person, who performs the service is known as the kamin of jajmin. The jajman pays his kamin in cash or kind on a daily, monthly or yearly basis prevailing in rural-pilgrimage centres in India. Chenchu Kumbha Utsavam, the festival of tribes. This falls on the first Tuesday or Friday in the first week after new moon day in Chaitra masam every year. This celebration is only for Chenchu-tribe of Srisailam. It will be colourful and very attractive by tribal and local-costumes. It has brought a broad and catholic feature for this sacred sanctuary due to tribals entry and participation for the main-deity, Goddess Brahmarambhakaji. Then the deity Brahmarambhakaji will be covered with kunkum and the usual darshan
also will not be made available as the deity is said to be dreadful and ferocious on that day, the temple will be opened on the next day. The Lord Mallikarjuna's temple will also not be opened on the day and the deity will be covered with curd-rice and holgas to reduce the hunger of the deity according to tribal-belief here. This festival recollects how the tribes enjoyed real and their ritual-status in olden-days along with the other castes, as the main-guardians of Jyothirlinga as well as Saktipeestham. But due to timely developments here, now priests became ritualists and giving rare chance for them in this feast. Economic-opportunities had centred at such a festival for Chenchus of Srisailam.
The largest pilgrim-groups from Andhra pradesh are from Reddy-casta. Reddys did acquire enough political clout claim priority in ritual-performance at the temples of Srisailam, Komatees are well settled business migrants here as trading-casta traditionally. The artisan-castes of blacksmiths, carpenters, oil-pressers, potters, etc., followed by the service-giving castes of barbers and washermen, followed finally by the low-castes some of whom Chenchus, eedigas as servants, scavengers, tanners, cobblers. These low-castes were also often agricultural and farm-workers, who were earlier subsisting on the lands of Reddys, Kapus in the agrarian settlements of the hinterland. Reddys as well as Komatees amassed
enough wealth to be able to advance loans to the lower castes here. They were exercising considerable authority in the village-community prior to migration. Lingayats acquired enough education and some among them also studied in their own religious-mathas to manage their institutions. The sacred-complexes and mathas also received monetary rewards, social-status and patronage from them. Charitable and educational activities were sponsored on some of these landed-gentry.

In addition, our survey found that the pilgrims come from the different castes with their traditional-faith towards Srisailam. Now-a-days, non-Hindus like Muslims as well as Christians new inclination for
the blessings; the fact that these pilgrims actually seek ‘darshan’ of main god and Goddesses of Srисailam.

In this chapter, I compare the social-structures of Srисailam from the point of an economic-exchanges. The spirit of devotion as the main-motive of socio-cultural and economic-exchanges among the pilgrims here. There are discernible-patterns among the pilgrims, who visit Srисailam during Shivarathri and Ugadi festivals. Many of them are landowners, businessmen, contractors, etc. They enter into a ritual-contract in relation with the main-temple of Srисailam for mutual-trust and security. The religious-beliefs and values of such entre-

preneurial castes may lead them to have a more economic
activity. The sacred-prominence here attaches to the role of business communities, namely, 'Komatees', who acted as moneylenders and bankers to catch the certain socio-religious persuasions of devotees; they would be competent to build charity-organisations based on the universal ethic of fair treatment and honesty in trade-dealings stems from some commercial-predisposition arising out of their sacred-traditions. Most of the ryots were financed by rich-peasants (Reddys) and these Komatees on the basis of written mortgages as their internal-trade. Reddys as well as Komatees renovated the ancient-complexes here; through substantial-contributions, these two castes assumed control over many temple-committees and trusts.
along with Lingayats. It was their benevolence, which triggered off a revivalist Telugu's national-identity in regenerating and recreating interest in the development of sacred-monuments under the aegis of the Endowments Commission by Andhra Pradesh Government.

The present income of the temple has exceeded 2 crores per annum. There are 120 furnished cottages and 8 choultries consisting of 250 rooms constructed from such donations and well managed by Devasthanam. Devasthanam provided free accommodation to donors and their relatives. Besides these there are 400 rooms constructed by private associations. An unique feature of Srisailam is that almost all the caste existing in Andhra Pradesh,

2. From the Notices on Income, Distribution and Expenditure, 1990-91, Srisaila-Devasthanam, A.P.
Karnataka, Maharashtra and other states have constructed their own choultries here with the donations collected mostly from their community people. But they are thrown open to all irrespective of the castes and they are providing free also to all the visiting-pilgrims.

Socio-cultural and economic exchanges factors accounts much ritually among our respondents as a whole. The other important fact is their responsibility for the happy interrelationships with these ritual-specialists. Many respondents worship at the main-complexes and all of them have visited these shrines at Srisailam. Visits to these sacred-complexes are made on almost all auspicious-days. They do not fail
to visit the secret-complexes, which are considered as
the hermitage of Nagarjuna, Pancha-mathas of Siddha-
Yogis, samadhi of Basavaeswara, hidden-underground
chamber of Akkamahadevi, Kapalakundalam of Kalabhairava
along with semi-nagasadhu, namely, Vasuki, whenever they
pass through the jungle-area of Srisailam. Moreover, the
growth of many small and big temples in and around
Srisailam attract the pilgrims from near and far off
places. The existing-Lingayat mathas and other trusts
have changes the pilgrims outlook and attitude to
secular-values. Of course, their aspirations vary with
the individual-position on the socio-cultural and
economic-exchanges, but they are certainly far ahead of

spiritual-achievement. As to the pilgrim as individual's aspirations and expectations regarding his future life with kind-blessings of Lord here to get a male-child or to win over his/her rival in the court case or to recover from unknown-illness; the traditional-pilgrim presents materialistic in his outlook and generally seems to be quite optimistic. Although they encourage the modern education and other professions to a great extent due to the different-schemes by Devasthanam, simultaneously 'Jajmang-interrelationships are still prevailing here.'

As noted in the previous chapter, the highly devoted
pilgrim's social and sacred involvement with the religious environment is considerable. As far as the social-solidarity is concerned the Indian-pilgrims as a whole realise that they have more in common-pattern linguistically, culturally and socially with the other visiting-pilgrims of Bharat like those of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The most dramatic findings was to rise in the number of pilgrims in such national-gatherings. A record proportion of those surveyed by our samples said they were very much interested in pursuing spiritual path and it is an important in their daily life after retiring from the service. The mathas like Ramakrishna as well as Vivekananda have opened the socio-welfare schemes
for such retired-aged people here.

Temple's economy and its expenditure: The total outlook for
temple-economy seems to be brighter than last decade. Income
from the pilgrims is the main-resource and statutory of
Devasthanam could recommend for use of surplus revenue
by the management. In the budget of 1989-90 showed that there
was a high correlation between the revenue-surplus (came
from the taxes and other duties) and the federal-resources came from the State and Central-Govts grants. They
constituted an insurance fund with its contribution to
better-amenities for visiting-pilgrims on the festivals

like Makar-Sankranthi, Shivaratri and Ugadi. Srisailam is a

3. From the Notices on Income, Distribution and Expenditure, 1990-91, Srisaila-Devasthanam, A.P.
gateway to the confluence of the holy-rivers, namely, Krishna and Pathala-Ganga and the main centre of religious congregation for the spiritual-world.

A tented township with different pandals has come up on the above festivals. Sadhus, naked yogineys (followers of Akkamahadevi-tradition), semi-nagas and other devout Hindus continue to pour in from all parts of the country and from abroad, especially the tantrics like Kapalika and Kalamukha traditions of Nepal-Jungles.

There is an unknown interrelationships between the local Bairagees and Kanapanta-yogis of Gorakhanatha-tradition from Gorakhpur in the northern-zone according to the local-legends here. It has assumed greater significance
since it is being held by a rich as well as poorer classes, which is repeated their spirit according to a fixed planetary-chart (panchang) by the religious-specialists with its socio-cultural identities. In 1954 Pushkaram about Rs. 73,000 has already been spent by the Devasthanam. About 71,000 devotees are arrived to take holy-dip in the 'pathala-Ganga' here.

Ware-house of this temple is the main network of entire sacred-structure. In our study of sacred-complexes, specially in South India where more recorded evidence has survived than in the North about such store rooms, which are attached to them. Certain

4. From 'SriSaila-Prabha' (a monthly bulletin of 1954 year) published by the Devasthanam, A.P.
interesting and significant information has come to light through our schedules in depth from its transactions within the sacred-complexes. The patronage of kings was an important factor in the development of Srisailam.

These rulers made endowments of gold, silver and lands to the temples, in order to show their gratitude to the Gods.

In doing so, their legitimacy was confirmed. Thus, a reciprocal-relationship came to prevail between the wielders of political-power and the temples. These transactions are recorded in the various copper-plate inscriptions. Usually, these copper-plates are fastened to the temple-pillars or walls for display to the public.
of course, some of these inscriptions make exaggerated
claim over donations. In spite of this, these records bear
mute testimony to the royal source of secular wealth.

The interrelationships fully developed with much
exchanges from their ancestor-lineages, who owned large
amounts of farmland as gifted by rulers due to their
loyalties in the form of 'agraharam or inam'. The same
people administered schools of vedic or agamic and
owned stores attached to sub-systems of sacred-complexes
functioning till minimally. Therefore, custom, mores,
tradition, social-authority, and the like cannot be
created by the state, and their origin lies in the
village community based on caste-tribe interaction or intersubrelationship.
They have developed a system of self-reliant, it was the true-tradition and these caste groups and known by its close union of Jajmani-ties.

The sacred-complex had not only an ancestral-store hall, where a general-exchanges being held in a daily needed rituals but also common-property, usually farmland, for getting payments in the form of rent. A genealogical chart listing all the daily events, classified by each generation from a founder up to the present. Exchanges were spontaneous associations without government interference and they controlled all economic-matters that had important meaning for their 'hundi'. Then, measures and weights, standards of currency including coins, record-
maintain with special reference to accounts of temple's

trusts, control of credit, cartels. The Devasthanam levied

not only taxes on vehicles but also entrance fees and

securities from them. They also arranged play and took

care of funerals for poor sadhus here. Subsidies for

marriage-expenses; educational and travel-expenses for

those among the qualified youths, who took 'Agamic' exa-

minations; administration-costs of the Agamic-school for

the priests; expenses for ancestral-worship or ceremonies

and for maintenance of the sub-temples and tombs;

and other things here. The rents and other donations that

come from pilgrims are an important source of income with

a good economic-base for common-purpose.