CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS
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The study highlights how religion has an impact on different aspects of social, economic, and cultural life of human beings at the historical worship complex of Tirumala. What moves several lakhs of pilgrims from all parts of India and the world, including ancients saints and kings, to visit the venerable institution, cannot be adequately explained in this study. Equally, this study cannot prove the presence of the superhuman divine powers behind, and reason out the spontaneous contributions of cash and other valuables deposited in the Hundi. These contributions, no doubt, are wisely utilised by the T.T.D. for the upkeep of the temple, towards various services to the pilgrims, and for meeting the expenditure connected with several humanitarian, educational, and cultural needs in the temple complex. In the words of the poet, Kalidasa, "The sun draws up water from the earth only to return it in thousand-fold".

The study, however, has revealed that from the first century onwards, several prominent kings, philosophers, and religious leaders have been inspired and spiritually have been drawn to Lord Venkateswara, seeking peace of mind and His blessings. In return, some of them contributed large sums of money and invaluable jewels to the Lord.
There are nearly 40 temples under the management of T.T.D. Owing to limitation of time and available funds for research, the present study was largely confined to Lord Venkateswara Temple at Tirumala. The study is based on books, professional journals, newspaper reports and articles, T.T.D. official reports, use of questionnaire schedule and personal observation. The review of literature pertaining to sociological studies on religion proved highly valuable.

The current study is still unable to pin-point the origin of Lord Venkateswara's idol in the sanctum of Tirumala. The discovery of Lord's idol in the ant-hill under the tamarind tree on the bank of Swami Pushkirini according to the legend, the role of the then ruler, Tondaiman, in building a modest temple for the Lord, the circumstances under which the religious teacher, Ramanuja got into controversies between Vishnavites and Shivaite -- all these require studies in depth.

Temples and mutts are important institutions of the Hindu religious system, each supplement and promote the spiritual thoughts of the people. It is reported that the madadipathies misused their hereditary privileges, and treated the mutts as their private property and, in many
cases, the heads of mutts were wordly, corrupt and immoral. In fact, they made little or no attempt to propagate or promote the tenets of Hindu religion. Subsequently, some of these problems were regularised through statutory Acts after Indian Independence under the State administration.

Among the various ancient monarchs' contributions to Tirumala temple, the ruler of Vijayanagaram, Krishnadeva Raya, stood prominent. He played an important role in building temples and serving as patrons of Hindu religion, arts and literature. Unfortunately, the Vijayanagar empire broke up, never to return to its glory, with the defeat at the Battle of Talikota in 1565 by the Bahmini Sultans, which ended the patronage of Hindu religious institutions.

After the advent of the British rule in India, it was felt that income from many temple endowments, including those of Tirumala, were regulated through statutory Acts, beginning in 1926, followed by various amendments in the Acts of 1952, 1959, and 1979, regulating temple funds and administration.

To the sociologist, religion like any other aspect of culture, is a social product created by human beings. Sociologists of religion now focus on the complex inter-relationship between society and religion.
The sociological approach to religion does not mean that the sociologist cannot personally believe in the doctrines of a particular religion. Many sociologists of a particular religion combine a sociological approach with a personal religious commitment. What sociological approach does imply is that the sociologist as a sociologist, cannot be concerned with the truth or the falsity of religious faith in their professional roles and that sociologists are not competent to pronounce on questions of faith that cannot be scientifically investigated.

The conflict approach to religion derives mainly from the writings of Karl Marx who saw religion as a form of false consciousness, and a tool of the powerful in the struggle between the social classes. To Marx, belief in religion is the profoundest form of human alienation.

Max Weber, on the other hand, maintains that under certain circumstances, religion and ideas can influence social change. According to him, capitalism requires hard work and earning more money, which are regarded as high values in themselves and that spending money in luxurious living is disreputable. Instead, he stressed that capital must be reinvested to gain more capital. Weber argued that such approach stemmed from the 'Protestant Ethic' of hard work and deferred gratification, and that other religious
like Hinduism did not provide the same incentive for bringing about social and economic change. Weber's concept of hard work and reinvestment of capital is still relevant to modern times.

In the matter of study of religion, what the sociologist Emile Durkheim, intuitively wrote about eighty years ago, may perhaps be observed today at Tirumala temple complex; we observe sacredness, religious beliefs and practices, supernatural elements and a sense of oneness and solidarity.

Tirumala temple is a huge non-profit religious organisation. This organisation appears like a big multi-million business corporation under the management of T.T.D., with thousands of employees under its pay roll. It has provided large-scale employment to the community in a big way, and has undoubtedly improved the economy of the region, if not the whole State. There appears to be one significant difference, that is, that the so-called business corporation has not declared any dividends, or offered monetary returns to its 'shareholder' like any profit-making organisation. Here the term 'shareholders' may be compared to the 'devotees' of Lord Venkateswara, and the 'dividends' may denote T.T.D.'s services to the visiting pilgrims, and their support to various charitable, humanitarian, educational and
cultural needs of the public. These perhaps may be part and parcel of Temple economy and services. Money in plenty is voluntarily contributed to the temple by the public, and money is appropriately spent by the T.T.D. management for several good purposes.

To single out one among the many useful purposes, the temple maintains a number of cattle, for which several men and women are employed by the T.T.D. to tend the animals, procure milk, butter, ghee and other dairy products, help-agricultural development.

For daily worship of the Lord various professional people are being employed, for example, to make implements during festivals, and which are readily marketed; for making clothes for presentation to temple staff during special festive occasions, thus encouraging cottage industry; weavers of family members employed and financially supported through loans and marketing. These are a few instances of monetary benefits to the local people arising from indigenous economy, which is part of temple economy and services.

Much of emphasis in this study is on Vedas and Sasthras, which are greatly patronised by the T.T.D. As Hindus, we owe great allegiance to the Vedas which are our
holy scriptures and which present a complete and panoramic view of life in all its facets. They contain within themselves, not merely the philosophical conclusions of the great Vedic rishis, but also a detailed code of conduct for ordinary man.

The need for sociological approach to religion, is to take into consideration the realities of interaction between traditional and religious beliefs under modern organisational feature. In an age of organisation, the contemporary society does not exclude the religious complex from the impact of rational principles of regulating the religious practices when such religious practices transform themselves from individualistic practices into mass practices. The Hindu religious beliefs in the transformation towards mass practices have not escaped from the modern principles of organisation.

The church in the West in its institutionalisation, has its own well-established sanctions and practices for such eventualities. But temples in India have left themselves for such eventualities and, as such, voluntary organisations, mostly characterised with religious functions like mutts have taken care of the organisational demands.
There are evidences that these mutts are not responsive enough to establish organisational framework for a fool-proof religious practices in a mass congregation like Tirumala-Tirupati temple. The establishment of T.T.D. is nothing but a response differing itself from the traditional religious mutts to the modern religious organisation. This is one of sociological rationales of religion and society.