

TEMPLE MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN THE CURRENT ERA

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Abstract

Temples being the rich heritage centres, and religious community centres are growing tremendously in different parts of the globe. As they grow, they are faced with huge challenges of different kind on a daily basis which require a thorough analysis to find appropriate solutions. This paper briefly describes the various issues and challenges faced by the temples at large in the current context and also list out ways to address them as well. Different management approaches to manage the temples better are also discussed at length.

Keywords: Temple Management, Management Issues in Temples, Solutions to issues in Temples, Management Approaches

Introduction

Temples are in existence since time immemorial and they have been an essential part of human life. They serve many purposes and are perceived as centres providing solace and comfort to people loaded with mundane issues and showing the spiritual path to attain the highest goal of life, self realisation. Whatever may be ones religion, these prayer centres be it a Temple, Masjid, Church, Gurudwara etc., are attracting huge no of devotees and often posing problems to manage them. Since people attach a huge value to these places which is immeasurable, the numbers of people visiting them have been constantly on the rise. This is the new reality in many countries across the globe. Temple Management is defined by Mule, Anand Datta(2015)¹ as " It is the management of what intangible service or produce a temple provides to the community."

In India, a day-to-day activity of a temple is managed by a temple board committee that administers its finances, management, and events. Since independence, the autonomy of individual Hindu religious places to manage their own affairs with respect to temples of their own got severely eroded and the respective

state governments have taken control of major Hindu temples; however, in other countries, such as United States, Australia etc., private temple management autonomy has been preserved. Dale Glasser, (2005)² explained well about building, maintenance and supervision of temples. Some questions about temple management like (1) Who may use the facilities and for what purposes? (2) Who will be responsible for their maintenance? (3) How would the operating cost of Manpower, Utilities be taken care of? The focus was more on the role of building superintendent, the role of temple building committee and the role of the temple administrator in efficient management of Temples. At macro-level, an ideal temple is that which acts as a throbbing community-centre that is freely open to every single member of community without any bias, where one worships the resident deity, prays to God, receives spiritual, intellectual and moral guidance and meets other members and celebrates common festivals, feasts and gets volunteering opportunity to help temple itself or those in community who are in need. Community also receives protection, shelter and solace in the times of crisis and all possible help during natural or manmade calamities.

So, if one asks, what does a temple produce? What is its output? We know that it cannot be quantified as a figure on a calculator. That is why, the easy answer, —to run temples in an efficient manner it needs more elaboration and a methodical approach. India has rich culture and historical heritage well preserved in its temple architecture and pilgrim sites. There are several famous India temples and if you were to go anywhere in India you will find a few of them. A temple is considered to be sacrosanct place and people of all religious faiths are welcomed into its pristine and peaceful surroundings. The temple depicts to people the growth of religion throughout the country and its spread.

Kubilay Kaptan, (2006)³ in a study focused on Management of Temple Tanks i.e. *Kundin* in Hindi language. As the author of this book is a Civil Engineer, he looks for Temple Tanks (*Kund*) from the view of architect. He had taken 21 South Indian temples for his study and focused on land use planning, water resource management and provision for parking etc.

Nilesh Madhusudan Shukla, (2013)⁴ stressed on the simple fact that the management of a temple is not similar to managing a business, a property or even a charitable institute; it is much more than those. He talked about things behind building temples, how are they financed since time immemorial and details of its structure. Also listed what is expected and what is not expected from a temple. An overview of temple functions such as administration, maintenance, engagement with community-volunteering, managing *pooja* rituals etc., were clearly depicted and further went on to give details of all the administrative aspects that a temple manager should pay attention to. He paid attention to three important subjects and they are;

- efficient maintenance of the premises,
- ways of engaging with community and
- inter faith protocols.

Further he focused on setting benchmarks for ideal *pooja* rituals, choosing appropriate stores, inspirational songs, various *pooja* requisites and innovative ideas to achieve them. Finally he drew attention of temple managers towards laws, bylaws and other governing aspects of running a temple and emphasizes that they need to know local laws governing temples and the community the temples intend to serve.

Ken Hurry, (2001)⁵ studied of temple position and orientation in the city. He says the position of temple depend on various factors. The first is the suns position at the solstices and equinoxes and the position stars. Author also focuses on "The Plan of Temple". The temple is built upon a combination of geometric figures with purpose of making is a summary of the universe and prodigious centre of energy.

V.K. Bhaskara Rao,(1992)⁶ described the administration of Religious Institutions in his book. It explains office Management, departmental management and work distribution system. Clear focus was laid on income, its structure and sources. Income position of temples and analyses of the structure, pattern and magnitude of major items of income during a period of 10 years were shared. Review of the expenditures pattern of the temple trust and analyses of the structure, pattern and magnitude of major items of expenditures during a period of 10 years were also provided. The opinions of the pilgrims on various services were also mentioned with statistical data.

P. R. Rao (1988)⁷ In his book "Indian Heritage and Culture" present a brief, yet vivid account of Indian heritage and culture. The book also describes the contributions made by various dynasties to the social, cultural and religious fabric of India. The author has identified various religious institutions functioning in India. The book provides information on how the practices of workshop in temples got institutionalized during the periods of different monarchs.

Challenges and Issues in Temple Management

Shreekala Padmanabhan(2016)⁸, in chapter 10 of her thesis on "A study of organizational structure selected aspects of management work culture and problems of Ashtavinayak temples in Maharashtra" described the challenges in spiritual tourism. Akanksha Singh(2013)⁹, in his study laid emphasis on how the recycling of temple waste (TW) mainly comprising of floral offerings could be done through vermin technology using *Eiseniafetida* and its impact on seed germination and plant growth parameters by comparing with kitchen waste (KW) and farmyard waste (FYW)vermin compost (VC).

Some of the major issues that temples are facing include

Crowd Management: The large influx of devotees thronging these religious places is a constant challenge. Despite of assiduous efforts of temple managers, many a time things become extremely difficult to handle resulting in lot of disturbances and inconvenience to pilgrims and authorities.

Creation and management of facilities: Various facilities like food distribution centres, accommodation complexes, hospitals, indoor and outdoor auditoriums to observe rituals and traditional practices pose a constant challenge as well. While there is a need to create or provide more facilities, the management of each facility itself will be a big challenge in itself.

Infringement of Carrying Capacity: Most religious centres in the country, major or minor, suffer from short but intense seasons that alter the dynamics of the region for the rest of the year. The Char Dham Yatra in Uttarakhand is one such example. Lasting from May till about November, it puts a serious pressure upon the transport infrastructure of the Garhwal region, which coupled with the monsoons and a lot of road construction still under progress imply landslides, meaning frequent road blocks, accidents and loss of life.

Waste Management: The waste management problem has aggravated over the years more so in the era of plastic. There are different kinds of waste like floral, food, plastic and other types causing a great degree of concern. With the advancement of science and technology, waste segregation and recycling has become possible. Big temples have successfully implemented these technologies and benefitted immensely.

Air Pollution: The sheer volume of travel in these areas makes the figures mind boggling. While trains still manage to absorb a majority of the travel volume, quite a substantial number of major religious tourism sites in India are still only accessible by road or foot, or a combination of the two (take the case of hilly regions).

Monetizing Religion: In the race for developing as many niches as possible, there is often the issue of religion being 'monetized', as the host community gets increasingly driven by the 'profit motive'.

Lack of scrutiny of religious trusts: There is a need to put forward regulations which governs the financial status and regulation of religious trusts as it looks to allay global concerns about money laundering and terrorist financing activities. Such a law will also pave the way to make public names of organizations that claim tax exemption to ensure greater transparency. This is especially crucial in a scenario when some of India's religious trusts are among the richest in the world.

Sound management practices of temples that could be useful in modern context comprise of the following

Good management is the backbone of an efficient enterprise and a Temple is no exception.

- Temple Management Systems should be established with all the necessary hardware and software required for a good and efficient management of the Temple. Timely MIS reports and real time monitoring makes systems effective and efficient. A fully hosted browser based solution relieves the temple management of routines like data storage and backup as well as updating of the software, adding new features and functionalities.

- Web based On-Line or Counter based Pooja Booking software with payment gateway integration. Date and time slot selection, repeat frequency, booking on special days is possible. The back office shows activity in real time and generates variety of end of the day reports that even help plan procurement, duty allocation and manpower management.
- Prepaid cards for cashless environment do away with the hassles of handling cash, soiled, counterfeit and torn notes as well as change. Cash handling can be centralized for ease of management.
- Point-of-Sale terminals and hand held devices allow quick, efficient and effort free turnaround. Simply connecting the hand held device to a terminal captures the data and generates a variety of reports.
- Access control, time management and employee management hardware and software allow efficient and effective manpower management. Transparent, system driven HR management facilitates discipline.
- Devotee Relationship Management (CRM) allows Temples to be sensitive towards regular visitors, donors and important persons. Visits can be planned and personalized.
- Enterprise network hardware, software and networking is now a necessity for resource sharing and protection of data.
- Internet access solutions depending on the needs of the temple management that are cost effective and give good uptime commitment. Suitable ISP is recommended depending on the location and availability.
- Corporate like presentations allow temples to showcase its activities to the devotees, donors and important persons.
- ISO 9001:2008 Certification for Quality Management Practices reinforces the confidence of the public at large and devotees and donors in particular in the management of the temple.
- Customized software development on any platform, Windows, Linux or Mobile can be done.
- There are few good organizations specialised in designing and servicing Temple Management Systems named TRIMAX¹⁰

Management Approaches

Managerial practices are greatly influenced and guided, either consciously or subconsciously, by managerial approaches. Each approach provides a number of concepts, frameworks and ideas. Each contains streams of thoughts and philosophies. Each approach offers a distinctly useful perspective in managing temples ¹¹.

Some of the popular approaches are:

1. Classical Approach
2. Behavioural Approach
3. Contingency Approach

Classical Approach: It mainly concerned with the increasing the efficiency of workers and organizations based on management practices, which were an outcome of careful observation. It mainly looks for the universal principles of operation in the striving for economic efficiency. This approach includes scientific, administrative & bureaucratic management. Briefly-

- Management as planning, organising and controlling
- Hierarchical organisation structure based on division of labour
- Autocratic leadership

Behavioural Approach: The behavioural management theory is often called the human relations movement because it addresses the human dimension of work. Behavioural theorists believed that a better understanding of human behaviour at work, such as motivation, conflict, expectations, and group dynamics, improved productivity. Briefly-

- Management as leading, motivating, communicating
- Flat organizational structure, teams
- Participative/democratic leadership style

Contingency Approach: A contingency approach to management is based on the theory that management effectiveness is contingent, or dependent, upon the interplay between the application of management behaviours and specific situations. In other words, the way you manage should change depending on the circumstances.

Adapting management and organisational approaches to changing circumstances

Temples are non profit, spiritual and service oriented organizations. They are responsible to the God and devotees. The temples mainly suffer from a lack of maintenance, poor service, inadequate tourist facilities, minimal community participation and inefficient public relations¹². A good management approach is required to combat these problems.

The organization systems approach embraces the best practices for determining the ethics of job candidates, codes of ethics, ethical decision-making, ethics and diversity training, ethics officers and hotlines, ethical leadership, ethical work goals and performance appraisals, environmental management, and community outreach. World peace and social justice requires the existence of ethical organizations that provide high-quality goods and services and are places for spiritual growth and development¹³

Conclusion

The managers of the most successful temples engage in strategic decision making about marketing, promotion, innovation, and public activities to increase the visibility and appeal of the temples. The technology is growing thick and fast and it should be effectively utilised in finding solutions to temple management issues and challenges. Many issues in temple management are best addressed by scientific approach. For

example crowd management, floral waste management to name a few. Leaving aside the challenges in managing people, the rest of the issues could be taken care of through better integration of technology. Appropriate HR practices would take care of the people related issues and if required, the temple management authorities shouldn't hesitate to go for professional consultancy services to find solutions to some of the pressing problems. By doing this the issues could be mitigated to a great extent.

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