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*Management of Udupi Sri Krishna Mutt and its  
Socio-Economic Impact on the People of the Region*

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*Abstract: Udupi Sri Krishna Mutt in Karnataka State (in India) is a magnificent religious, economic and socio cultural entity. Sri Krishna Mutt and the eight Mutts (called Astamathas) here are intimately associated. It is the head of these eight mutts (pontiffs) who take up the responsibility of managing Sri Krishna Mutt for 2 years each by rotation.*

*Sri Krishna Mutt and the cluster of Mutts around it have never been looked upon as places of worship with a commercial bias. Education and enlightenment receive greater emphasis than economic gain, in the functioning of Udupi Mutts.*

*Sri Krishna Mutt, associated with and assisted by the eight mutts of Udupi, is a potential employer for a host of employees, a centre of Vedic and secular learning, an organisation with genuine social concern, apart from being an agent of relief to the poor. It encourages education, art and culture besides performing various charitable activities.*

*The development and growth of Udupi region are closely associated with Sri Krishna Mutt in one way or the other. Sri Krishna Mutt serves as an agent for social redistribution of wealth. It is a powerful social and economic organization. The mode of living of the people of Udupi region is greatly influenced by the shrine of Sri Krishna, its rituals and other socio-economic activities.*

*Keywords: A magnificent entity, social redistribution of wealth, development and growth of Udupi region, mode of living of people.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Sri Krishna Mutt in Udupi in Karnataka State, India is visited by the people from every corner of the country as well as by tourists from foreign countries, for it has its own charm and fame. This being a magnificent religious, economic and socio-cultural entity has its own impact on the very mode of living of people in Udupi region.

Sri Krishna Mutt and the eight Mutts called (*Ashtamathas*) here are intimately associated. It is the heads of these eight mutts who take up the responsibility of managing Sri Krishna Mutt for two years each by rotation.

Thus, the most interesting aspect of management of Sri Krishna Mutt is that it is rotated every two years among the pontiffs of eight mutts in a preset order. This unique system of management of Sri Krishna Mutt by the eight mutts in rotation for a period of two years each is called '*Paryaya*' system.

All the eight mutts in Udupi are thus jointly responsible for the development and growth of Sri Krishna Mutt and for its socio-economic contributions to the people in Udupi region. However, whenever a mutt takes over the management of Sri Krishna Mutt for a period of two years, that particular mutt chalks out independently activities for the period. This ensures a healthy competition, particularly from the point of view of the development of Sri Krishna Mutt and its socio-economic contributions to the society. Over centuries, they have been able to add substantially to the wealth and fame of Sri Krishna Mutt and its usefulness to the people in Udupi region.

The different pontiffs of the eight mutts attached to Sri Krishna Mutt have established, from the time to time, different institutions in the Udupi region and also in different parts of the country. The eight mutts of Udupi working for Sri Krishna Mutt are, thus, also managing a series of institutions and all such institution are also for the benefit of all sections of people in the society.

Sri Krishna Mutt Udupi and the cluster of mutts around it have never been looked upon as places of worship with a commercial bias. Education and enlightenment receive greater emphasis than economic gain, in the functioning of Udupi mutts. Perhaps this partly explains why Udupi has made a mark on the educational map of our country.

## II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The set of religious events performed everyday in Sri Krishna Mutt leave a lasting and permanent impression on onlookers. The *Poojas* and *Utsavas* here are conducted with such a perfect precision that they inspire effectively the true dedication and discipline in the people.

Sri Krishna Mutt serves as an agent for social redistribution of wealth. It collects money through its religious and socio-economic activities from the people, mainly from the rich, and distributes the same among all classes of people, mainly the poor. Hence money spent by Sri Krishna Mutt on its various activities is in fact the money well distributed.

Sri Krishna Mutt is known for centuries for its legendary mass feeding in the form of free food *prasada*. In recent years the scope of this traditional mass feeding has widened quantitatively as well as qualitatively. At present, nearly five thousand people consisting of nearly 2000 students from 40 schools and colleges, nearly 200 widows/orphans and nearly 2000 to 3000 pilgrims/visitors are given here the two daily meals absolutely free irrespective of their religion, caste and creed. On special festive occasions the mass feeding arrangement is done on a still larger scale. Perhaps the most impressive scheme of Sri Krishna Mutt is the system of free meals provided for the patients undergoing medical treatment in the Government Hospitals in Udupi, and KMC Hospitals in Udupi and Manipal. Free food is served in these famous health care centers to the needy patients and also to their relatives/care takers twice a day without discrimination of religion and caste.

Sri Krishna Mutt also provides Mid-day meals to the students studying in different rural schools in Udupi District. This scheme is called by the name "*Chinnara Santharpane*". Presently nearly 30,000 students of 180 private schools are provided Mid-day meals absolutely free of cost, irrespective of their religion and caste.

Apart from free food to the students provided in Sri Krishna Mutt, the eight mutts of Udupi and Sri Krishna Mutt provide accommodation to many of them. All the students studying Vedas here are provided free accommodation in Sri Krishna Mutt. The students studying in the Sanskrit College in Udupi and many other students studying in different schools and colleges in Udupi are provided accommodation in the mutts freely and in the hostels managed by the mutts in Udupi on payment of a nominal rent.

Had there not been free feeding arrangements in Sri Krishna Mutt, it would hardly have been possible for many of these students to continue their education beyond the matriculation level. The free accommodation facility in Sri Krishna Mutt and the eight associated mutts in Udupi is a real blessing to such students. Further more, the extensive and exemplary mass feeding arrangements in Sri Krishna Mutt have extended benefits not only to the student community but also to different segments of the society in this region.

Sri Krishna Mutt and the eight associated mutts patronize Vedic studies as well as secular learning. Apart from imparting education in Sanskrit, Yoga, Veda etc. they are managing several educational institutions providing for formal and even professional education. Thus Sri Krishna Mutt, associated and assisted by the eight mutts at Udupi, provides food for stomach and brain simultaneously.

Sri Krishna Mutt and other eight mutts provide employment opportunities in Udupi region and also in a number of institutions established by them in different parts of the country. They also provide part-time employment to a number of needy students in Udupi coming from poor financial backgrounds. Such part time employment enables the students to earn the money to cover their fees and other expenses. The mutts thus, provide the poor students, along with free food and accommodation, the unique opportunity for earning and learning.

The extensive feeding arrangements in Sri Krishna Mutt have contributed greatly to the development of the culinary art. During every *Paryaya* period of two years, several cooks get a really intensive practical training in preparing dishes of different varieties. Such cooks, on completion of the *pariyaya* period, go out and are mainly responsible for the development of the catering business and the Udupi Hotels and Tea-Coffee restaurants, in different parts of the country. Sri Krishna Mutt thus contributes in a unique way to the development of the hotel industry.

Sri Krishna Mutt has produced several traditional experts who can assemble the chariots (temple cars) in the most fascinating manner and also those who can erect artistic and decorative pendals and mantapas. Sri Krishna Mutt also provides opportunities to a number of musicians, pipers and drummers to get trained in their art.

Sri Krishna Mutt invites different professional artistes from all over the country to give their performances in the mutt and reward them duly. Even the non-professional artists are encouraged here to promote their artistic faculties for which the mutt provides not only the platform and the guidance but also a financial reward. Sri Krishna Mutt as a socio-economic institution thus contributes to the promotion of art in a variety of ways.

Sri Krishna Mutt has been responsible for many social, economic and cultural activities in and around Udupi. Several such programmes are sponsored by the mutt. Cultural programmes including music, dance, *Harikeerthana* and *Daasakeerthana* recitations are organized here. On important festive occasions, the competitions in music, drawing, painting, rangavalli and other traditional fine arts are conducted for students and the general public and the persons making considerable public contributions in various fields are recognized, honoured and rewarded.

Sri Krishna Mutt requires a variety of goods and services for its day-to-day activities and also for social festive occasions and as such it has been the biggest consumer of the locality. Even the merchants from other regions get opportunities on festive occasions to sell here a variety of goods brought by them from distant places. Sri Krishna mutt for its religious activities requires a wide variety of materials mostly made of metals and alloys, in addition to different kinds of utensils and kitchenware. This has given patronage to many houses of craftsmen in Udupi region who have developed over the years special skills in this metal-craft. Sri Krishna Mutt, has thus, also contributed to the development of local trade and industry in the Udupi region.

Udupi mutts have envisaged a special scheme by the name *Gosourakshna* (protection and care of cows) for providing a proper shelter to the stray cattle. The mutts have been nearly successful in protecting them from being butchered or left unattended.

Sri Krishna Mutt and the allied mutts in Udupi have not lagged behind in providing healthcare facilities to the poor people of this area. The mutts also provide financial assistance to the poor patients to meet their medical expenses irrespective of their religion, caste and creed. They are also running the Sri Krishna Charity Clinics in Udupi and Bangalore for free medical counseling and treatment of the poor and needy.

Sri Krishna Mutt and the other eight Udupi mutts have built over the years several choultries, auditoriums, halls and student hostels in Udupi as well as in other important cities in the country. The mutts offer therein very good facilities and charge very moderate rent, just to cover the maintenance expenses.

Udupi mutts have taken keen interest in constructing and donating decent huts to the poor and downtrodden dalits apart from running schools for their children and also for the children residing in slum arrears in cities like Bangalore. Besides this, during the times of distress like floods, famines, earthquakes etc. the Seers of the Udupi Mutts have actively participated in providing relief to the needy people. During the times of social unrest, the pontiffs of Udupi try to pacify the people by urging them to give up their violent activities and resolve their difference of opinion by peaceful means.

The mutts have also come out in a big way to help the old and infirm members of the society by establishing *Vraddhashrama* (homes for the old). They have also established orphanages to take care of the unfortunate children who are deprived of parental care.

### III. CONCLUSION

Sri Krishna Mutt associated with and assisted by the eight mutts of Udupi, is thus, a potential employer for a host of employees, a centre of Vedic and secular learning, an institution with genuine social concern, apart from being an agent of relief to the poor. It encourages education, art and culture besides being a charitable institution. Its influence on the socio-economic life of the people of the region is quite remarkable and conspicuous.

The development and growth of this region are closely associated with Sri Krishna Mutt in one way or the other. In fact this region has grown with Sri Krishna Mutt and with the growth of the region Sri Krishna Mutt has also grown as an institution. The growth of the region and the growth of Sri Krishna Mutt are interdependent. However, the institution which initiated the growth process was Sri Krishna Mutt.

Generally institutions come into being and develop in regions of repute and fame. It is Sri Krishna Mutt that has been responsible for the reputation and fame of this region, which has been witnessing phenomenal development and growth over the years. It may not be an exaggeration to say that what has put this region on a secure place in the national map of our country is only Sri Krishna Mutt.

Thus, Sri Krishna Mutt is more than just a religious entity. Apart from being a religious entity, it is an institution whose role pervades social, economic and cultural spheres of this region. It is a powerful social and economic organization. The network of social relationships and mode of living of the people of Udupi region are greatly influenced by the shrine of Sri Krishna, its rituals, festivities and other socio-economic activities.