



Preparation of Tirumala Srivari Laddu: A Critical Study

Dr. V. Thimmappa

Dept. of History S.V. University Tirupati- 517 502

ABSTRACT

In this article an attempt is made to highlight the preparation of Srivari Laddu, ingredients which are used for preparing the Laddu, Income and Expenditure and the pilgrims satisfaction on the Taste of Laddu. In order to know the pilgrims satisfaction on Srivari Laddu a question had been asked the pilgrims about their opinion. Based on the pilgrims opinion suggestions will be given for the TTD Authorities to provide better Srivari Prasadam for the pilgrims.

KEYWORDS : Asthanam, Proktham, Kalyanostavam, Dittam, Geographical Indication Registry

Tirumala Sri Venkateswara Temple is the world famous temple. Probably no place of worship anywhere in the world would attract as many pilgrims and receives as much revenue as the Tirumala temple. More than 60,000 pilgrims visit Tirumala every day¹. The Lord has a good appetite not only for fragrant flowers and ornaments but also for delicious food. Lord Sri Venkateswara who loves delicious food, happily shares the same with his devotees in the form of Prasadam. Tenali Ramakrishna, the court poet of Sri Krishna Deva Raya has bestowed the title 'Thindimendayya' (Voracious eater) on the Lord after he was unable to assess the Lord's food intake. Now, here in the word Prasadam of this magnitude are prepared with pure ghee. It is believed that the left over ghee after preparing items on a day is sufficient enough for preparing prasadam in smaller temple through out the year².

Tirupati. *Laddu* is the main offering (Prasadam) to the presiding deity³. We think of Laddu once we hear the name Tirumala. Then the huge vada occupies the next position.² The architect of the 'Laddu is Kalyanam Iyengar. He introduced the Mirasidari System to prepare Laddus. Those preparing laddus in the kitchen (potu) were called as Gamekar Mirasidars. The Mirasidars enjoyed the privilege to prepare Laddus and get their Share till AD 2001. Out of the each lot of 51 laddus, 11 were given to Mirasi Brahmin families⁴. The TTD management won a legal battle in the Supreme Court for abolition of Mirasi system. Mirasidari system was abolished in 2001, whereby the Government of Andhra Pradesh put an end to the rights of the hereditary trustees in preparing offerings.⁵

About one tonne of besan flour, 10 tonnes of sugar, 700 kg of cashew nuts, 150 kg of cardamom, 300 to 500 litres of ghee, 500 kg of sugar candy and 540 kg of raisins are used daily⁶. We cannot return home without Tirumala Laddu after having the divine darshan of Lord Venkateswara. There is no satisfaction in doing so. Every devotee returning from Tirupati will necessarily distribute 'Laddu' as prasadam to his friends and relatives. Laddu is so important for every devotee that even VIPs bring recommendation letters to have a few more than the quota for each Arjitha Seva such as Kalyanam or the Archana Antara Seva. The reason for such a popularity of Laddu among pilgrims of Tirumala is its unique flavour, characteristics and never compromising quality of Laddus ever since it all began distributing 300 years ago, though the size of Laddu has reduced over the years.⁷

Historical Background

Historical records shows that during the time of Pallavas prasadam was offered to the Presiding deity. Later Devaraya -II made of grant of three villages and gift of 200 panam for certain daily offerings. In addition another officer of the Devaraya-II, Amatya Shekara Mallanna was made arrangements for *Naivedyam* and *Nityadiapam* to Lord Venkateswara. He introduced time table for food offering to the Lord. The remaining food will be distributed for the pilgrims with free of cost. These Prasadam was called as *Tiruppongam*⁸. Later Sukkiyam, Appam, Manohara Padi, Vada are to be offered to the God. The Tirumala Temple received liberal patronage under the Vijayanagara rulers. The name given in the inscription is *Avasaram* the word *Avas* in Sanskrit is food. This term is noticed also in three previous inscriptions of the year 1554, 1579 and 1616⁹. The inscriptions also made it clear

that there was a similar food offering instituted by one Maharaja Sri Shudaji Bhanuji Pantulu. There seems to be some justification to inform from the inscription that Aliya Ramaraja's food offerings ceased after the conquest of the country by the Golkonda Kings and that the few who were continuing to do Service in the temple stood in need of some wholesome food like suddhannam (cooked food)¹⁰. Gradually there is demand for the Prasadam in Tirumala temple. The Madras Government identified the problem in AD 1803 started sale of Prasadams. Here the pilgrims demanded more *Vadas* because, *Vada* was preserved more days when compare to other Panyarams. The Madras Government started to sell the sweet Bundi that is the initial form of Laddu. In 1940 that was shaped into Laddu¹¹.

The period from 1996-2001 was a time when the TTD prepared Laddu and other prasadam themselves. It became difficult for the TTD to increase the number of Laddus per day. The influx of pilgrims meant distribution of equal or more number of Laddus. They also had to cater to other 'Sevas' and Kalyanotsavams. It became a Herculean task for the officials to meet the demand¹².

POTU

The Lord's kitchen is called as Potu. In this potu, prasadam was prepared with only firewood. From 1984, the use of LPG started as there was a spurt in the number of laddus required every day. Even though the number increased to one lakh laddus per day only 150 cooks were able to handle the work with the introduction of latest cooking technology. This number of laddus was less than half of the demand from devotees. Another kitchen was added to make another 70,000 laddus¹³.

On special occasions like Ugadi, the staff prepares special laddus and offer them to the God. Till now, the biggest laddu offered to Lord Venkateswara is 32 kg. It was prepared by special hereditary priests known as archakas in special temple kitchen. Working space has been increased by expanding the Potu. This improved the sanitary and hygienic condition of the Potu. Stainless steel trays are being used to stock the Prasadam.¹⁴ The TTD has entered into consultancy service contract with the Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore to ensure good quality of Prasadam Panyarams. The Panyarams prepared in the Padi Potu will be credited to Vagapadi account where sales are conducted.

In Tirumala temple three types of Laddus are being prepared which are 1. Asthanam Laddu, Kalyanosthavam Laddu and Proktham Laddu¹⁵. The difference between these three Laddus is:

Asthanam Laddu: this is prepared in Special Festive occasions. These can be distributed only to Special Guests like President of India, Prime minister, Presidents, and Prime ministers from other countries. They weighted 750 grams. For this more quantity of Cashew nuts, Almonds, Ghee and saffron flowers were used for the preparation of these Laddus when compare to the allotted Dittam.

Kalyanotsavam Laddu: The Laddu will be distributed to those who took part in the Kalyanotsavam and Arjitha Seva Grihastas. This

is tasty when compare to the small Laddus. Those who want to Kalyanotsavam Laddu they can pay Rs. 100/- for each, there is demand for these Laddus in Tirumala.

Proktham Laddu: this is small Laddu which is distributed to the common pilgrims in Tirumala Temple. Weight of the Laddu is 175 grams. According to the TTD records for preparation of each Laddu estimated Rs. 25. But the TTD distributed with subsidised rates for the benefit of the common pilgrims¹⁶. Pilgrims those who completed their Darshan they can get Two Laddus at the cost of Rs. 20.

The list of ingredients and the proportion in which they are to be used is called dittam. Changes in dittam were made six times to meet the increasing demand. Recently, the TTD management has decided to stick to the original dittam's specification as there are many complaints on the falling shelf-life of the laddus. Now, the cost of preparation of each laddu is Rs 25 "The dittam is meant for limited number of laddus. One has to multiply it with additional numbers required to be made. Ingredients are being used for preparation of Srivari Laddu in Tirumala temple as follows¹⁷.

S. No	Ingredient Name	in Metric tons
1	First Quality Rice	8,000
2	Sugar	7,200
3	Cashewnuts	700
4	Cardamom	80
5	Cow Ghee	3,400
6	Sugar candy	160
7	Raisins (kishmish)	350
8	Gram flour	3,600

The Tamil Nadu milk co-operative federation and Karnataka State Milk Federation have so far supplied 2,400 tonnes of ghee to Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanams for year¹⁸.

The TTD has also other sources of income through the sale of laddu. The revenue from the sale of laddu annually is more than 11 million rupees. In 2012-13, TTD estimates Rs.140.00 Crores receipts for the sale of Laddus, it was projected Rs. 150.00 Crores.

Patent protected

Tirupati laddu got the patent rights under the Geographical Indications of Goods Registration and Protection Act in 2009. The TTD had applied for GI with Chennai-based Geographical Indication Registry to avoid its black-marketing by hawkers and middlemen¹⁹.

Pilgrims opinion on the Taste of Laddu

For this an attempt is made to elicit the views of the 500 pilgrims regarding the Taste of Srivari Laddu. The pilgrims were interviewed at Tirumala and their opinions were sought the respondents gave different opinions and reasons on the Taste of Laddu and the frequent changes in taste of Laddu.

Distribution of Pilgrims according to their level of satisfaction on the taste of Srivari Laddu

S. No	Level of Satisfaction	Pilgrims	
		No.	Percentage %
1	Bad	02	00.4
2	Satisfied	60	12.0
3	Good	438	87.6
	Total	500	100

It is evident that more than eighty five per cent (87.6%) of the pilgrims were agreed that Laddu taste is good. The reason for such a popularity of Laddu among pilgrims of Tirumala is its unique flavour, characteristics and never compromising on quality of Laddus (though the size of Laddu has reduced over the years.) More importantly Laddu is the favourite *naivedyam* of Lord Venkateswara himself.

Remaining 12% of the pilgrims mentioned that they are satisfied with laddu taste. Less than one per cent (0.4%) of them were answered that the Laddu taste is bad when compare to the past days. The reason is that

Problem of storing laddus

Apart from preparation of laddus , storage of laddus is a real problem. As Tirumala is a cold place, the humidity in air is high. Laddu can not be stored for long time. Due to heavy demand laddus are sent to sales counters immediately after preparation. The taste of Laddu will be lacked due to the heavy influx of the pilgrims. Instead of preparing one lakh Laddus today 2.50 lakhs of Laddus are preparing in Tirumala, automatically the taste will be low.

Conclusion

Though many modern methods were implemented in the speedy and quality preparation of laddus ,they have not yielded good results. It is suggested that the Administration should take care while preparing the Laddu (prasadam), that a mechanised pressing system can be introduced for making Laddu. The employees those who are working in Potu should maintain the kitchen in a hygienic condition.

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