

# Temple Centred Regional Economic Regenerative Framework

By

Sridhar C Mulakaluri

[sridhar@xustudent.edu.in](mailto:sridhar@xustudent.edu.in)

Asst Professor, Prin L.N. Welingkar Institute of Management Development & Research,  
Bengaluru

## Introduction

The purpose of this research is to study, understand, codify, and promote entrepreneurial ecosystems and revenue models for sustainable livelihood generation, around temples as cultural and spiritual centres. In the ancient India, till the onset of colonial rule, all the rulers leveraged temples for social harmony, establishing and practicing Sanatana dharma, and holding together the social fabric and economic sustenance of the local communities. Each temple supported direct and indirect employment/ livelihood opportunities for the locals. The revenue was generated by the donations/ offerings of the devotees as well as the agricultural lands bequeathed to the temple by the kings. This ensured that all the trades and crafts were integrated and linked to the temple practices, processes, and rituals ensuring a steady livelihood of the people. Even the performing artists were part of the temple staff, offering their performances as a prayer as well as a source of entertainment to the visitors, ensuring a sustainable livelihood and preservation of art forms.

However, over the years, this model of temple-based economic ecosystem has disintegrated and disappeared, putting a lot of traditional art forms and crafts at risk. This research aims to understand and codify this ancient Indic system into a replicable business model so that the same can be built at every temple across Bharat, leading to generation of sustainable economic systems and livelihoods. The research also explores integration of possible revenue sources of modern Bharat.

## The Framework

The proposed Temple-Centered Regional Economic Regeneration Framework (TCRERF) is a district-level framework for sustainable local economic development through temple economic ecosystems. It provides a flexible and replicable framework that helps create tourist circuits at district level, while aligning other ecosystem and economic elements to bolster the local economy.

TCRERF comprises of ten pillars that support the regional economic regeneration. The framework draws from Institutional Economics (Elinor Ostrom; Douglass North), Economics of Religion (Sriya Iyer), Heritage Economics, Circular Economy Theory, Cluster Development Theory (Michael Porter), Indic Knowledge Systems (Dharma-based stewardship), and Social Entrepreneurship and Community Enterprise Models. The

framework assumes that sustainable local prosperity emerges when sacred institutions become economic coordinators rather than merely devotional endpoints.

The proposed ten pillars of the framework are

- Sacred Core (Spiritual Capital)
- Pilgrimage & Tourism Mobility
- Ritual Supply Chains
- Cultural & Creative Economy
- Social Redistribution & Welfare
- Governance & Institutional Architecture
- Circular Economy & Sustainability
- Entrepreneurship & Local Enterprise Creation
- Health & Hygiene infrastructure
- Security & Safety provisions

This is implemented locally by creating District Temple Economic Network that comprises of 2 to 3 temple clusters. Each temple cluster is a Temple Economic Circuit that would have an integrated system of TCRERF addressing all the 10 pillars. This would include a wide range of stakeholders from the local population and governing bodies.

Temple economic Vitality for each Temple Economic Circuit would be measured which is a composite metric driven by all the ten pillars and would roll up to District Economic Vitality. This would help regular monitoring and measurement of the overall effectiveness of the economic regeneration.

This system can work within any regional context, leveraging a group of any religious structures and heritage structures. The focus is leveraging what each region has and building the necessary civic infrastructure and service provision to drive regional economic regeneration. While temple tourism is a major driver, it is expected that each district would be able to offer a diversified and immersive experience using local cuisine, art forms, nature destinations, adventure opportunities, indigenous people, and culture.

### **Transdisciplinarity**

This framework offers a rich and nuanced opportunity to bring together diverse research disciplines in terms of history, anthropology, governance, religion, tourism, civic infrastructure, entrepreneurship, livelihood creation, culture, arts and crafts, inclusion and social security. The framework can be used to create such an ecosystem anywhere in the world and is flexible enough to cover any local factors.