ABSTRACT

‘A study on the nature of relationship between the state and the management of Hindu temples in Kerala’ focuses on the issue of secular state’s role in the affairs of places of worship of the religion professed by majority of the people in Kerala. Historically, world over, when religion has been used by rulers to safeguard their territorial sovereignty, perhaps India is the first newly independent democracy to adopt secularism; especially in a multi-religious, multi-party context, the state’s secular credentials are repeatedly tested.

The objectives of the study are:

1) To study historical development in the relationship between the state and the Hindu temples in Kerala.
2) To identify and track the areas of government interventions in matters relating to management of Hindu temples in Kerala.
3) To study the systems of accountability in a temple owned and managed by the state government.

To achieve the above objectives the case study method was adopted. The Guruvayoor Devaswom was selected for the case study. Guruvayoor Devaswom was owned and managed by the ruler of Kozhikode for many centuries. After the attainment of independence and the subsequent formation of Kerala state in 1956 the administration of Guruvayoor Devaswom was brought under the control of The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department of the state. In 1978 the temple was brought under the control of a statutory body known as Guruvayoor Devaswom Managing committee. The famous Sree Krishna temple and 12 sub temples come under the Devaswom.

Sources of data

Secondary data was collected from published and unpublished reports, and scholarly works. The published sources include census, reports of the Tourism department, Devaswom department, various commissions, research work of scholars, and articles in news paper and periodicals. Unpublished sources include research theses, Devaswom hand books, copper plates kept
in temples, inscriptions in the temple premises. Primary data was collected through interview guide. Members of the Managing Committees and employees of the temple were interviewed in the study.

Chapter one includes introduction, literature review, statement of the problem, research methodology, objectives, significance of the study, chapter scheme, scope of the study and limitations of the study. Chapter two is divided into two parts. First covers the administration of minority religious institutions in Kerala and the second covers the evolution of temple administration in Kerala. The third chapter focuses on Guruvayoor Devaswom per se and the state. The last chapter brings together the findings.

Findings of the study

Despite state interventions during the pre-independence period social and cultural order in the management of the sacred area continues. After independence the intervention of a secular state is limited to non-sacred area mainly due to the compulsions of democracy and coalition politics. As a result, hereditary monopoly right of the Brahmins in the sacred area of the temple owned by state government continues. In the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, the government ended the hereditary monopoly rights of Brahmins in the sacred area. State desisted from introducing reforms fearing communal unrest and polarization of people along communal lines. Though the hereditary rights of the temple priests are inconsistent with the norms of equality of opportunity, the issue being religious, the democratically elected state governments of Kerala have decided to wait for a consensus to be reached.