

**Denominational and State Conflict:
The Experience of the SDMS Board of Education
1952-1996**

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This dissertation traces the history and evolution of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS) with specific reference to educational conflict experienced between the SDMS Board of Education and the State of Trinidad and Tobago during the years 1952-1996.

The purpose of the investigation was to identify those efforts undertaken by the State to deepen the incorporation of the SDMS into the national system of education, and to examine the SDMS responses to the challenges encountered in the process.

The Literature Review explored Church-State conflict in three selected countries: Ireland, the United States of America and England. A study of controversial issues between the SDMS and the State of Trinidad and Tobago in relation to those which occur internationally, allowed for comparative analyses and provided a backdrop for the presentation of solutions proffered by authoritative sources.

The investigation revealed that in Trinidad and Tobago today, some political elements urge the implementation of a secular education system, although the SDMS' contribution in the field of education is unquestionable. The SDMS will view the nationalization of Hindu schools as a betrayal of the Hindu community in a plural society. The present United National Congress (UNC)

administration (1995-2000) has shown no tendency to deviate from the position in which the SDMS is an integral part of the overall education plan.

A solution exists to the controversy – “Who really controls education: the Church or the State?” The same laws of the land govern the Church and the State. We are a very religious nation and we can set an example to the world that Church and State are partners in education. The SDMS has expressed no intention to establish an educational system competing with or in opposition to the State. The SDMS wishes to remain a partner with the State in the delivery of education.

Keywords: Vashti Singh; Denominational; State Conflict; Maha Sabha.