

problems for the maintenance and management of temples. The lamps are lit wherever the devotee feels like doing so. At Thanjavur lamps are lit next to the sanctum in the narrow passageway adjacent to exquisite sculptures, on small ledges and in the corridor with paintings. When they are lit in large numbers within a confined space, excessive polluting smoke is emitted, causing severe inconvenience to the other visitors. At Darasuram, lights are lit at the feet of the image of *Sarabesvara* such that the deity is engulfed in smoke. Moreover, the damage caused by oil spillage from the lamps and the excess oil smeared by the devotees on the architectural features is beyond manageable limits. As a solution, in the corridor (*mandapa*), the sculptures and wall paintings have been protected to prevent visitors from smearing oil on them.

The ASI, in consultation with the temple administration and the trustee, has identified specific places where lamps can be sold and lit. In the recent past, this has paid rich dividends. In addition, chemical cleaning of the stone surface is done periodically, but this has to be reviewed as it may cause irreparable damage to the stone surface. The ASI has started an awareness programme by which devotees are informed about the negative effects of burning lamps at various places in the temple. This is, however, a continuous process.

The renovation and repair of temples have always been recognized as important factors of temple use and are given consideration from the moment of a new temple's construction. In fact, the principles of upkeep, maintenance, conservation, restoration and re-use are all enshrined in the codified texts (*Agamas*). The culmination of the conservation/renovation process is the reconsecration (*kumbhabhishekam*) ritual (Figure 6). Though this ritual was performed rarely in the past, probably due to lack of funds, it has now gained momentum with many devotees willing to contribute financially. This results in a large gathering adding to the crowd management issue.

Figure 6. The *Kumbhabhisheka* (consecration) at Thanjavur in 1997.

