

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

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DATED : 29.04.2026

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE **MRS.JUSTICE L.VICTORIA GOWRI**

W.P.Crl.(MD)No.2470 of 2026

P.Sundaravadivel

... Petitioner

Vs.

1. The District Collector,
Madurai, Madurai District.

2. The Commissioner of Police,
Madurai City, Madurai.

3. The Joint Commissioner,
Arulmighu Kallazhagar Temple,
Melur Taluk,
Madurai District.

... Respondents

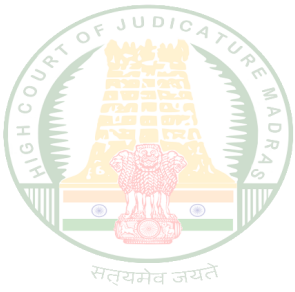
PRAYER : Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India for issuance of Writ of Mandamus directing the respondents to take action on Petitioner's representation dated 14.04.2026 seeking to take preventive actions against the miscreants throwing chappals on the devotees during Lord Kallazhagar ceremonial procession and while entering the Vaigai River which are part of Chithirai Festival organized by the respondents.

For Petitioner : Mr.R.J.Karthick

For Respondents : Mr.C.Satheesh (R1)

Government Advocate (Civil)

Mr.S.S.Manoj (R2)



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W.P.Crl.(MD)No.2470 of 2026

Government Advocate (Crl.)

Mr.S.Manohar (R3)

Standing Counsel

ORDER

PROLOGUE:

This Writ Petition, though framed as one seeking preventive police action, raises issues far deeper than maintenance of mere law and order. It touches upon the preservation of civilizational memory, protection of religious freedom, and safeguarding the sanctity of a living cultural tradition that has endured through centuries.

2. The grievance of the petitioner is that anti-social elements and miscreants have been indulging in the deplorable act of throwing chappals upon devotees participating in the sacred procession of Lord Kallazhagar Temple, particularly during the revered ceremonial journey culminating in the deity's entry into the Vaigai River.

3. This Court cannot brush aside the seriousness of such acts as isolated disturbances. They strike at the heart of constitutional freedoms protected under



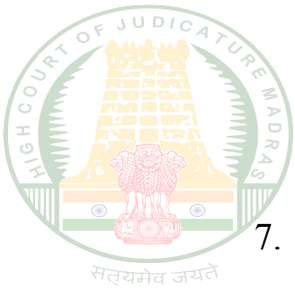
Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution of India, which guarantee to every citizen the freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion, and equally protect religious customs and observances from unlawful interference.

4. Throwing chappals at devotees in the midst of a divine procession is not merely an act of disorder; it is an affront to faith, an assault upon customary religious practice, and a desecration of the secular fraternity that forms part of the constitutional ethos.

CULTURAL AND CIVILIZATIONAL BACKGROUND:

5. The Chithirai Festival is not merely a temple event. It is a civilizational continuum, a living embodiment of Tamil heritage, rooted in Sangam culture and nourished through centuries.

6. The festival, in its present form, represents the confluence of the Meenakshi Amman Temple traditions and the Kallazhagar Temple traditions, symbolically uniting Shaivite and Vaishnavite streams in a singular expression of devotional harmony.



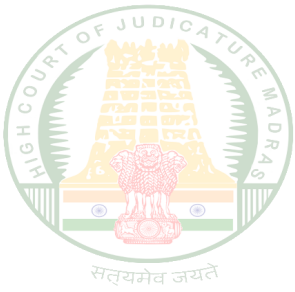
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7. The Pattabhishekam of Goddess Meenakshi, the celestial Thirukalyanam, and the arrival of Lord Kallazhagar into the Vaigai are not isolated rituals. They represent the culmination of Tamil social memory, agrarian gratitude, artistic expression, collective devotion and communal cohesion.

8. Madurai, celebrated in Sangam literature as Koodal, has for millennia stood as the cultural capital of Tamil civilization. This annual festival, a reminder that faith in India is not a private abstraction but a public cultural experience woven into the life of the people.

9. The participation of lakhs of devotees cutting across caste, creed and economic barriers transforms the festival into a living expression of secular fraternity, secularism in its truest Indian sense, namely equal reverence and peaceful coexistence of diverse traditions.

10. Any act intended to insult or disrupt such a sacred observance, therefore, has implications transcending ordinary breach of peace.

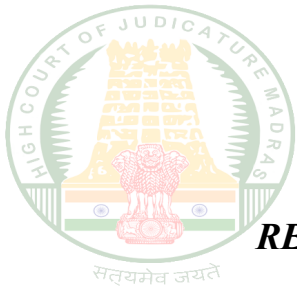
**WEB COPY CASE OF THE PETITIONER:-**

11. The petitioner has approached this Court pointing out repeated incidents of certain miscreants throwing footwear at devotees during the procession route extending about 7.6 kilometres within city limits and also at the riverbed during the ceremonial entry of Lord Kallazhagar.

12. Learned counsel for the petitioner circulated before this Court a disturbing visual recording depicting such unruly conduct during the previous year festival.

13. It is the case of the petitioner that despite representation dated 14.04.2026, no effective preventive strategy specifically addressing such acts had been communicated.

14. The petitioner would submit that unless immediate judicial intervention is made, the sanctity of the ongoing festival would stand imperilled.

**RESPONSE OF THE RESPONDENTS:-**

15. Learned Government Advocate appearing for the respondents submitted that elaborate arrangements have been made.

16. It was submitted that nearly five lakh devotees are expected; 280 mandagapadi points are covered; 244 CCTV cameras have been installed; 169 focus lights are arranged in the riverbed; 54 watch towers are erected; drone surveillance are activated; and extensive police deployment are made. It was further submitted that 32 persons have already been detained as preventive measures. The State assures peaceful conduct of the procession.

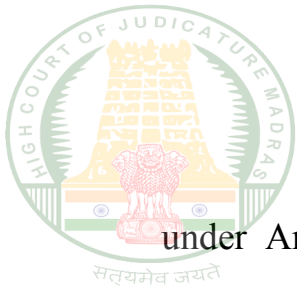
POINT FOR CONSIDERATION:-

17. The point that arises for consideration is:

Whether this Court, in exercise of jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution, ought to issue preventive directions to secure the sanctity of the Chithirai festival and protect devotees' constitutional right to practice religion free from unlawful interference?

ANALYSIS:-

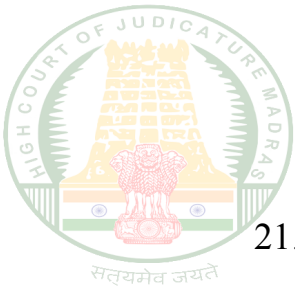
18. This Court answers the above in the affirmative. Religious freedom



under Article 25 does not merely protect belief in abstraction. It protects meaningful exercise of faith through customs, observances, processions and rituals traditionally associated with that faith. The right to practice religion necessarily includes a corresponding right to perform established customary religious observances without humiliation, intimidation or obstruction by disruptive elements.

19. The acts complained of cannot be trivialised as stray hooliganism. Throwing chappals upon devotees participating in a divine procession carries symbolic insult. It seeks to pollute sanctity through calculated indignity. Such acts offend not merely public order but constitutional morality.

20. India's secular spirit does not require indifference to religion; it requires protection of every faith against unlawful insult and disturbance. The constitutional vision under Articles 25 and 26 reads with the fraternity ideal embodied in the Preamble obligates the State to ensure that sacred religious traditions are celebrated in peace, dignity and mutual respect. This Court is conscious that maintenance of public order lies primarily with the Executive. Yet where apprehended disruption threatens constitutional freedoms, judicial directions become warranted.



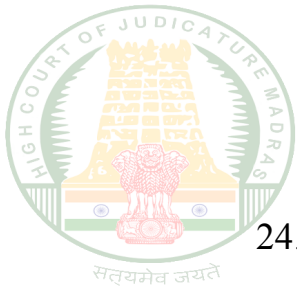
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21. This Court was shown a video evidencing recurrence of such acts notwithstanding arrangements claimed in the previous year. The apprehension therefore cannot be dismissed as speculative. The assurance of deployment alone cannot suffice unless accompanied by visible and immediate deterrent mechanisms.

22. This Court is constrained to observe that throwing chappals upon devotees in a religious procession amounts to a grave affront to public decency, religious harmony and social fraternity and must be dealt with, to borrow a phrase apt to the occasion, with an iron hand. Miscreants attempting to mar a sacred event cannot claim indulgence under the guise of ordinary disorderly conduct. Preservation of a centuries-old civilizational festival is itself a constitutional value.

EPILOGUE:-

23. Before parting, this Court deems it necessary to observe that the Chithirai Festival is not merely a religious event but a grand testimony to the endurance of Tamil civilization. The journey of Lord Kallazhagar into the Vaigai is not simply a ritual crossing. It is poetry in motion, history in procession, and faith in collective embodiment.



24. If such a spectacle, nourished by time immemorial, is sought to be

sullied by acts of vulgar disruption, the State cannot remain a passive spectator.

Though this Court is fully conscious that judicial directions cannot ordinarily extend into matters of educational policy or curricular design, this Court cannot refrain from observing that the constitutional value of fraternity, so deeply reflected in festivals such as these deserves to be sown in the minds of future generations. For the sake of future India and young Indians, those seeds of fraternity embedded in our Constitution must find living expression.

25. To preserve such festivals is not merely to preserve ritual. It is to preserve the beauty and comity of the secular spirit of this democratic Republic.

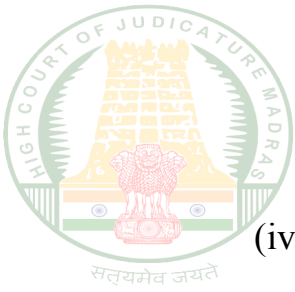
DIRECTIONS:-

26. Accordingly, the following directions are issued:

(i) The second respondent shall forthwith deploy 15 to 20 striking force vehicles along the 7.6 kilometre city route of the procession.

(ii) At least 10 striking force vehicles shall be stationed in the Vaigai riverbed area.

(iii) Police personnel stationed in watchtowers shall remain on highest alert and continuously monitor all vulnerable spots with drone surveillance.



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(iv) Any person found indulging in throwing chappals or any similar disruptive act against the procession or devotees shall be immediately apprehended on the spot and proceeded against in accordance with law, and appropriate remand proceedings shall be initiated forthwith.

(v) Preventive and intelligence-based policing shall be intensified throughout the festival period.

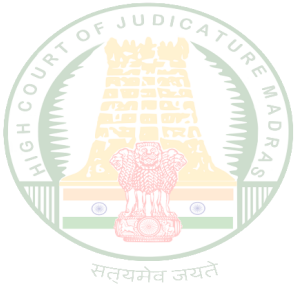
This Court makes it clear that any attempt to desecrate or disrupt the sanctity of the procession shall be dealt with sternly and without hesitation.

27. With the above directions, this Writ Petition stands disposed of. No costs.

29.04.2026

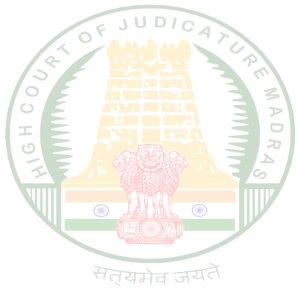
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Note: Issue order copy on 29.04.2026.



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2. The Commissioner of Police,
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3. The Joint Commissioner,
Arulmighu Kallazhagar Temple,
Melur Taluk,
Madurai District.
4. The Additional Public Prosecutor,
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court,
Madurai.



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L.VICTORIA GOWRI, J.

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Order made in
W.P.Crl.(MD)No.2470 of 2026

Dated
29.04.2026