



2025:KER:64812

DBP No.53/2025

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V

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THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR

TUESDAY, THE 26TH DAY OF AUGUST 2025 / 4TH BHADRA, 1947

DBP NO. 53 OF 2025

IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD- COMPLAINT REGARDING UNAUTHORISED COLLECTION OF LOCKER CHARGES AT PAMBA, SABARIMALA AND RESULTANT REVENUE LOSS - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED BASED ON AN ANONYMOUS COMPLAINT DATED NIL- REG.

PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

X

RESPONDENTS:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA, REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT, REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001.
- 2 CHIEF POLICE COORDINATOR(ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE), (POLICE HEADQUARTERS), SABARIMALA, PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN - 689 713
- 3 THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST , THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 003
- 4 THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS, NANTHNCODE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 003
- 5 EXECUTIVE OFFICER SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O., PATHANAMTHITTA - 689 662
- 6 CHIEF VIGILANCE & SECURITY OFFICER (SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE), TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCODE, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 003

ADV. G BIJU, SC

ADV. S. RAJMOHAN, Sr. G.p

THIS DEVASWOM BOARD PETITION HAVING BEEN FINALLY HEARD ON 20.08.2025, THE COURT ON 26.08.2025 DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING:



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JUDGMENT**K. V. Jayakumar, J.**

This suo motu proceeding dated 11.04.2025 is initiated on the basis of an anonymous complaint submitted to the Honourable Chief Justice about the unauthorized collection of locker charges at Pamba, Sabarimala and the resultant revenue loss caused to the Travancore Devaswom Board.

2. It is stated in the complaint that only one locker room is available at Pamba. The grievance projected is that a fee of ₹100 is collected for each bag, but no receipts or vouchers are being issued to the pilgrims for the said amount. Furthermore, it is stated in the complaint that nearly 50 lakh pilgrims visit the hill shrine during the festive season, which spans from 15th November 2024 to 25th January 2025 and that the revenue loss as a result is huge.

3. When the matter was placed before the Honourable Chief Justice, it was referred to the Devaswom Bench of this Court for the issuance of appropriate directions.

4. Adv. S. Rajmohan, learned Senior Government Pleader takes notice for respondent Nos. 1 and 2 and Adv. G. Biju, learned Standing Counsel appears for respondent Nos. 3 to 6.



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5. The learned Standing Counsel for the Travancore Devaswom Board submitted that the kuthaka right with respect to the cloakroom and the space for placing viri was given to Sri. Shyam Sasidharan Nair for an amount of Rs. 1,28,44,444/-. As per the terms and conditions of the tender, the charge for a locker is Rs. 30/- for 24 hrs. The charge for space for placing viri is Rs. 50/-per head.

6. The learned counsel further submits that one Abhishek Kumar M. M., a devotee, had submitted a complaint before the Pamba Police Station alleging that an amount of ₹100/- was collected from him for the use of the cloakroom by Kuthaka No.112, Sri Shyam Sasidharan Nair. The said complaint was forwarded by the police to the Executive Officer of the Travancore Devaswom Board, pursuant to which a notice was issued to Sri Shyam Sasidharan Nair, directing him to collect only the permissible amount from the devotees and to treat them with due courtesy. It is submitted that, thereafter, no further complaints were received by the Travancore Devaswom Board. A display board indicating the prescribed rates for the use of the cloakroom has also been exhibited at the site.

7. The learned counsel has also produced the photographs of the board exhibited in front of the cloakroom.



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8. We have carefully considered the submissions of the learned Senior Government Pleader and learned Standing Counsel for the Travancore Devaswom Board.

9. The kuthaka right for the cloakroom and stall was given to Sri. Shyam Sasidharan Nair for an amount of Rs. 1,28,44,444/-. It appears that complaints had already been received regarding the collection of excess amounts for the use of the cloakroom and stall. The anonymous complaint has been lodged by a devotee from Telangana.

10. When the Travancore Devaswom Board received a complaint from one Abhishek Kumar, dated 11.04.2025, the only step taken was to direct the kuthaka holder to collect only the permissible amount.

11. From the photographs received, it appears that the Board had allegedly exhibited a notice in front of the locker room and stall; however, the same is in the vernacular language and is very small in size. During the Mandala Mahotsavam, devotees from various other states would also visit the temple premises. It is reported that approximately 50 lakh devotees visit Sabarimala during the festive season spanning from November to January. Presently, vouchers or receipts are not being issued to pilgrims for payments made in respect of the cloakroom and stalls. This raises the likelihood of



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substantial revenue loss to the Travancore Devaswom Board. Moreover, amounts in excess of the permissible rates, as stipulated in the terms and conditions of the tender, are being collected by the Kuthaka holder.

Therefore, having considered the submissions of the learned Standing Counsel, we are of the view that this DBP can be disposed of with the following directions:

1. Strict action shall be initiated against the Kuthaka holder, Sri Shyam Sasidharan Nair, for collecting amounts in excess of the permissible limits, in violation of the terms and conditions of the tender.
2. The Travancore Devaswom Board shall ensure that boards displaying the prescribed rates for the cloakroom and stalls are prominently exhibited in front of the respective shops, in English, Malayalam, and other regional languages, to facilitate and inform the devotees.
3. Urgent steps shall be initiated against the violators of the terms and conditions of the kuthaka tender, including proceedings for blacklisting them.
4. The Chief Vigilance Officer of Travancore Devaswom Board shall take effective steps to avoid the malpractices by the kuthaka holders.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K. V. JAYAKUMAR
JUDGE**

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