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IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

Reserved on : 11-08-2026

Pronounced on : 17.08.2026

CORAM

THE HON'BLE DR JUSTICE G. JAYACHANDRAN

AND

THE HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE E.MANOHARAN

W.P No. 9273 of 2019

Madhavan Ramanuja Dasan
39-B, Kumar Street,
Kancheepuram - 631 581

..Petitioner(s)

Vs

1. The Commissioner
Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment
Department,
Nungambakkam,
Chennai-600 034
2. The Joint Commissioner,
HR and CE Department,
Sathuvacheri, Vellore.
3. The Assistant Commissioner,
HR and CE Department,
Kancheepuram.
4. The Executive Trustee,
Arulmigu Devaraja Swamy Devasthanam,
Sannadhi Street,
Kancheepuram.



5. T.A.P.Sri Rangachari
Secretary
Perumal Koil Thennacharya
Darsana Sabaha.
No.47, North Mada Street,
Chinna Kancheepuram 631 4501

6. K.B.Srinivasan
Secretary,
Yathidra Pranava Sabha
20, Thiruvengkatam Nagar,
Chinna Kancheepuram-631 501.

7. L.Ravi
Secretary
Vadakalai Sri Vaishnava
Sampradaya Sabha
45A, Sannathi Street,
Chinna Kancheepuram-631 501

8. Sampath Bhattar

9. Ranga Bhattar

10.Murali Bhattar

11.Raja Bhattar

12.Narasimha Bhattar

13.Seena Bhattar

14.Devu Bhattar

15.V.Parthasarathi

[R5 to R15 impleaded vide order dated
11.08.2026 made in WMP.No.11922 of 2019
by GJJ & EMJ]

..Respondent(s)



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Prayer: Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying for issuance of a Writ of Mandamus, directing the respondents to prohibit discrimination against the Non-Brahmin devotees of Thenkalai cult in the matter of distribution of Prasadam, Theethams and in reciting Tamil Prabandams and other practices in the Arulmigu Devaraja Swamigal Temple at Kanchipuram and in particular in the Sri Manavala Mamunigal Shrine.

For Petitioner(s): Mr.S.Shanmugasundaram
and Mr.S.Senthilnathan

For Respondent(s): Mr.R.Bharanidharan,
Spl. Government Pleader (HR&CE)
for R1 to R4

Mrs. Hema Sampath, Senior Counsel
for Ms.R.Meenal
for R5 & R6 [Proposed Respondents]

ORDER

(Order of the Court was made by E.Manoharan J.)

The above-mentioned Public Interest Litigation has been filed by the Petitioner, who is a resident of Kancheepuram and the Secretary of Thirukatchi Nambi Thirumaladiar Seva Sangam bearing Registration No.237 of 2003. The Petitioner submits that he is a devotee of Lord Devarajaswamy at Kancheepuram and he is a Thenkalai Vaishnavite and that Thenkalai Vaishnavam is accepted in the above Devasthanam. Petitioner states that the



Devasthanam has got many shrines and the devotees from all communities worship the deities and particularly the Sannathi of Manavala Munigal is a very important Sannathi for Thenkalai Vaishnavites.

2. Learned Counsel for the petitioner submits that worshipers from all communities worship all the deities without any major discrimination except the Sannathi of Manavala Munigal. The petitioner counsel submits that for the Sannathi of Manavala Munigal, there are two entrances, one is the main entrance and the other one is the side entrance and that the Devasthanam is not permitting non-brahmin devotees to enter through the main entrance and that they are asked to use the side entrance only and that the brahmins are permitted to use the main entrance and therefore, there is clear discrimination. The learned counsel for the petitioner also states that non-brahmins are not given permission to recite the hymns in all the shrines of Devarajaswamy Temple.

3. He also states that non-brahmins are made to stand outside the Sananthi where they will get Prasadham and Theertham but no Satari will be placed on them. He states that the discrimination is practiced at the time of birthday function of Manavala Munigal for 10 days. He states that the petitioner had made representations to the authorities in this regard and it is also brought to the attention of this Court through the letter from the 3rd respondent dated



14.10.2003 to the temple wherein the 3rd respondent has stated that there should not be any discrimination and that if there is any discrimination in the name of temple custom, strict action will be taken. Another letter dated 23.12.2003 from the 3rd respondent also states that there should be no discrimination between the brahmins and non-brahmins in the method of distribution and place of distribution of Theertham, Satari and Prasadham. Learned Counsel for the petitioner has also brought to the attention of the Court, an order dated 31.10.2008 in W.P. No. 25845 of 2008 passed by the First Bench of of this Court wherein the Court has affirmed the directions mentioned in the letters stated *supra* and has directed the 1st respondent Devasthanam therein to implement the directions in letter and spirit. In light of the above, the petitioner has filed this Public Interest Litigation to prohibit discrimination against Non Brahmins in the Arulmigu Devaraja Swamigal Temple in Kanchipuram.

4. In this regard, the Executive Trustee, on behalf of the 4th respondent has filed a counter affidavit. Learned Special Government Pleader appearing for the 4th respondent, based on the counter affidavit, has stated that it is practically impossible to allow all public inside the Azhwar Acharyas sub shrines which are small structures and that the Adhyapaga Goshti and Adhyapak mirasi Gosti members themselves are not able to be fully accommodated inside the sub shrines and because of this, members of the public are not able to be



accommodated inside and therefore have to be accommodated only outside the sub shrines during the service periods.

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5. Learned Special Government Pleader submits that the temple administration will not discriminate any portion of the public in the matter of distribution of Theertham, Satari and Prasadham and that all members of the public are treated equally. Our attention was also drawn to the counter affidavit wherein it is stated that the rendition of Hymns and Nalayira Dhivya Pradandhams during Sathumarai and Seva Kalams are not accommodated as of matter of right to anybody or any other section of people except by Thenkalai Sect, as Adhyabaga Mirasi, as the latter is a statutorily secured right and it also carries the right of remuneration and preferential right of honors at par with service mirasi holder rights. The learned Special Government Pleader states that except for above, the administrative body of the Temple does not prevent either the petitioner or any other person or any group from reciting of Nalayira Dhivya Pradandham in any shrines of the Temple at any time if they want to worship and that steps are taken to ensure that there is no discrimination in the Temple.

6. The Impleaded 5th and 6th respondent have also filed a common counter affidavit where they have stated that there is no discrimination or caste based segregation in the Temple. It is submitted that sub shrines including that of Sri



Manavala Munigal are small halls and many service holders themselves have to stand outside the sannathi and recite prabandham recital service. Learned Senior Counsel for the 5th and 6th respondent has submitted that Divya Pradhandam is an office conferred on the Thenkalais of Kanchipuram and an attempt to make it look like a common ritual is not correct and that there is no discrimination in the distribution of Theertham, Satari or Prasadham.

7. We have heard the parties concerned and considered the submissions advanced.

8. Before we proceed, it is necessary to extract the following from Bhagavad Gita:

Chapter 9 Verse 29 [Translated]

“I am equally disposed to all living beings. I am neither partial to anyone nor do I hate anyone. But those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me and I am in them.”

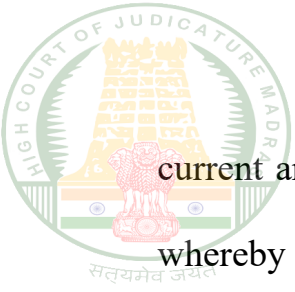
- Lord Krishna

In the eyes of God, all living beings are equal and God does not discriminate.



9. Having said that it is to be noted that the Hon'ble Courts have also held that there is no room for discrimination in a place of worship. In any event, the learned Special Government Pleader, who has vehemently stated that there is no discrimination in the Temple has put forth the submission that the statement of the 4th respondent in their counter affidavit can be taken on record as an undertaking that they will ensure that there is no discrimination in the distribution of the Theertham, Satari and Prasadams. Suffice it to say that this would resolve one of the grievances of the petitioner, especially, insofar as it relates to the distribution of the Theertham, Satari and Prasadams.

10. Insofar as to the issue of the recital of the hymns and Pradandham are concerned, the statement of the 4th respondent in Para 9 of their counter affidavit is taken on record to the effect that apart from the Adhyabaga Misari, which is a right secured and conferred for the Thenkalai Sect and an important service offered during certain rituals, the petitioner nor any other person or any Group will not be prevented recital of Prabandhams in any shrines of the Temple for the purpose of their worship. This effectively will also resolve the other grievance of the petitioner that Non Brahmins are not permitted to recite the hymns in the shrine. It is also seen that it is not the intention of the petitioner to disrupt any of the traditional rituals that are performed in praise of the deity as he himself has stated that he worships Lord Devarajaswamy. Therefore, if the



current arrangement as explained by the Learned Special Government Pleader, whereby the petitioner will also get his chance to recite the hymns in the shrines is preserved and in this way, there is no discrimination occurring by following any tradition.

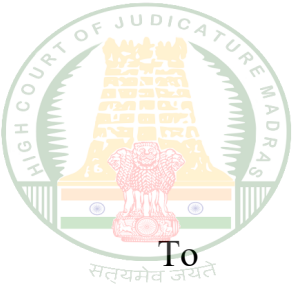
11. In light of the above discussions, the Writ Petition stands disposed of.

There shall be no order as to costs.

(G.J.,J.) (E.M.,J.)
17-08-2026

Index: Yes/No
Speaking/Non-speaking order
Neutral Citation: Yes/No

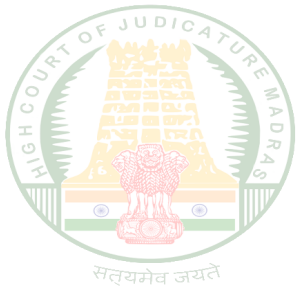
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To

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**DR.G.JAYACHANDRAN, J.
AND
E.MANOCHARAN, J.**

DP

ORDER MADE IN

WP No. 9273 of 2019

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