

Hindu Temples Symbolize Completion Of Religious Goals Of Society: Kerala High Court On Suspected Interruptions In 2024 Thrissur Pooram Festival



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The Kerala High Court observed that Hindu Temples are the zenith of social and religious hopes of a society.

The Court observed thus in a batch of Writ Petitions instituted by devotees of Lord Vadakumnathan where the common point of issue was the conduct of Thrissur Pooram at Vadakkumnatha Kshethramaidanam of Sree Vadakkumnathan Devaswom, which is managed by Cochin Devaswom Board.

A Division Bench, comprising Justice Anil K. Narendran and Justice Viju Abraham held,

"By 'Agama Sastra' Hindu temples reflect the pinnacle of social and religious aspirations of society. The temple is the prime focus in life of a society and is the pride, symbol and unity of the society, often. The temple brings under its fold citizens from its many segments and denominations and makes them one unit."

The worship that takes place in the sanctum sanctorum and within the temple premises is important; so are the festivals and occasional processions that involve the direct participation of the entire community. They complement each other."

The Bench further said that though worship of the god in the sanctum sanctorum could be a person's religious or spiritual requirement; festivals are a display of the community's joy, exuberance, devotion and pride and are also an idiom of a community's bonding.

The Senior Advocate S. Sanal Kumar appeared on behalf of the Petitioners and State Attorney N. Manoj Kumar, Sr. G.P. S. Rajmohan, and Senior Advocate P. Viswanathan appeared for the Respondents.

Facts of the Case

The Petitioners i.e., the people who are devotees of Lord Vadakumnathan wished to hold that interference by State Government and its machineries in administration of Temple through utilization of Police force and thus preventing centuries old rituals, traditions and customs are violative of religious freedom granted under the Constitution of India. They also requested guidance to formulate proper guidelines, to regulate the behavior of the police authorities during the religious festivals and temple ceremonies, with due consideration to the rituals and customs of the temple and the religious right of the devotees to watch/participate in the necessary religious rituals, customs, and practices observed at the temple.

They also requested disciplinary action against the officials for their intentional acts allegedly interfering with the rituals and traditions of Thrissur Pooram. Different reliefs were requested in the Petitions for holding an enquiry in relation to the incident that occurred in relation to Thrissur Pooram festival of the year 1199ME (2024).

Court's Observations

The High Court in the above scenario of the case, directed,

“Another relief prayed for in these writ petitions is about formulation of a comprehensive scheme/guidelines/standard operating procedure for proper conduct of Thrissur Pooram in future.”

On the above point, the learned State Attorney would mention a joint meeting held online on 01.03.2025, chaired by the Chief Minister, followed by yet another joint meeting held on 14.03.2025 at Thrissur Collectorate, chaired by the Devaswom Minister.

The Court also instructed that the State Attorney would place on record a copy of the minutes of the meeting, along with a memo, after serving copy to counsel for both sides.

"The Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950, was enacted for making provision for the administration, supervision and control of incorporated and unincorporated Devaswoms and of other Hindu Religious Endowments and Funds", it observed.

The Court also instructed the State to implement appropriate and effective crowd control in Thrissur Pooram in 1200ME (2025) on May 6 and 7, 2025 according to the Police Bandobast Scheme already drawn up.

"District Police Chief, Thrissur City shall see that experienced police staff are deployed to oversee crowd management at key places. The District Collector, Thrissur, shall make sure that there is adequate coordination in the Thrissur Pooram-related activities by the District Administration officers", *it directed*.

The Court held that the Cochin Devaswom Board, Paramekkavu Devaswom and Thiruvambadi Devaswom will take care to ensure that all the activities in relation to Thrissur Pooram for the year 1200ME (2025), are done in good time, as per the existing practice in Vadakkumnathan Devaswom.

"With regard thereto, the High Court disposed of the Writ Petitions and made necessary directions."