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DBP No. 37 of 2026

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V

&

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR

FRIDAY, THE 10TH DAY OF APRIL 2026 / 20TH CHAITHRA, 1948

DBP NO. 37 OF 2026

IN THE MATTER OF COCHIN DEVASWOM BOARD - COMPLAINT
ALLEGING IRREGULARITIES AT SREE KURUMBA BHAGAVATHY
TEMPLE, KODUNGALLUR - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED
BASED ON COMPLAINT BY CONVENOR, SREE KURUMBAMMA
BHAKTHAJANA SAMITHI, KODUNGALLUR - REG.

PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENTS:

- 1 STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY THE SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT
SECRETARIATE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 001
- 2 THE COCHIN DEVASWOM BOARD
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY,
ROUND NORTH, THRISSUR - 680001
- 3 THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER
COCHIN DEVASWOM BOARD,
ROUND NORTH, THRISSUR - 680001

ADV. RASHMI K M, SR. GP.,
ADV. K P SUDHEER, SC FOR CDB

THIS DEVASWOM BOARD PETITION HAVING BEEN FINALLY
HEARD ON 10.04.2026, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY DELIVERED
THE FOLLOWING:



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ORDER

K. V. Jayakumar, J.

This DBP is registered on the basis of a complaint submitted by the Convenor, Sree Kurumbamma Bhakthajana Samithi, Kodungallur, dated 03.11.2025.

2. In the said complaint, the Samithi has raised certain issues regarding the administration of the Kodungallur Sree Kurumba Bhagavathi temple, specifically with respect to the inadequacies of amenities and facilities for the devotees or the pilgrims.

3. One of the issues highlighted is the lack of proper toilet facilities for the devotees; even though an amount of Rs. 5/- is collected from the devotees, the toilets are kept unclean and unhygienic. It is further alleged in the complaint that there is corruption in the 'Prasada Oottu' of the said temple. Even though large amounts are collected from the devotees and public, the Prasada Oottu is limited to a certain number of devotees.

4. The complainant has also highlighted yet another issue that the devotees are denied satisfactory darshan by the temple employees. Another issue highlighted in the complaint is the insufficient provision of drinking water in Sree Kurumba Temple. The water coolers installed in the temple are not



maintained properly, and the water therein is contaminated, which would invite various health hazards to the devotees. Therefore, the complainant/samithi seeks the intervention of this Court in the aforementioned issues.

5. Sree Kurumba Bhagavathi Temple (also called Kodungallur Bhagavathy Temple) at Thrissur is one of the most ancient and powerful Devi temples in Kerala, dedicated to Bhadrakali. The Kodungallur Bharani Festival is one of Kerala's most intense and ancient celebrations, dedicated to Goddess Bhadrakali at the Kodungallur Sree Kurumba Bhagavathy Temple. It symbolizes the victory of good over evil. Lakhs of devotees visit the temple during the annual festival.

6. The principal issue highlighted by the complainant samithi is with regard to the lack of amenities and facilities for the devotees or bhakthas including insufficiency of toilets and bathrooms, adequate drinking water facilities and the denial of the right of the bhakthas for a satisfactory darshan in the Sreekovil of the Sree Kurumba temple.

7. We have heard the submissions of Smt. Rashmi K.M, learned Senior Government Pleader and Sri. K. P. Sudheer, learned Standing Counsel for the Cochin Devaswom Board.

8. Sri. K. P. Sudheer, the learned Standing Counsel, would submit that Sree Kurumba Bhagavathi Temple is one of the major temples under the control of the Cochin Devaswom Board. The main festival of the temple is Meenabharani



celebrated during March–April. Lakhs of devotees visit the temple during the annual festival from different parts of the State and even from the neighboring States. The learned Standing Counsel would submit that, considering the large inflow of devotees during the festival season, the facilities available at the temple cannot be said to be sufficient.

9. Smt. Rashmi, the learned Senior Government Pleader, had also emphasised the need for arranging more facilities and amenities for the devotees of Sree Kurumba Bhagavathi Temple.

10. Before further discussion, it would be apposite to refer to Section 73A of the Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950, which prescribes the duties of the Cochin Devaswom Board.

“S. 73A- Duties of the Board.-

It shall be the duty of the Board to perform the following functions, namely:--

(i) to see that the regular traditional rites according to the practice prevalent in the religious institution are performed promptly;

(ii) to monitor whether the administrative staff and employees and also the employees connected with religious rites are functioning properly;

(iii) to ensure proper maintenance and upliftment of the Hindu religious institutions;



(iv) to establish and maintain proper facilities in major temples for the devotees.”

11. In **A. A. Gopalakrishnan v. Cochin Devaswom Board and Others¹**, a Bench of three judges of the Apex Court, observed that the Board is duty-bound to protect the interests of the deity. Paragraph 10 of **A.A. Gopalakrishnan** (supra) reads as follows:

“The properties of deities, temples and Devaswom Boards, require to be protected and safeguarded by their Trustees / Archaks / Sebaitis / employees. Instances are many where persons entrusted with the duty of managing and safeguarding the properties of temples, deities and Devaswom Boards have usurped and misappropriated such properties by setting up false claims of ownership or tenancy, or adverse possession. This is possible only with the passive or active collusion of the concerned authorities. Such acts of 'fences eating the crops' should be dealt with sternly. The Government, members or trustees of Boards / Trusts, and devotees should be vigilant to prevent any such usurpation or encroachment. It is also the duty of Courts to protect and safeguard the properties of religious and charitable institutions from wrongful claims or misappropriation.”

12. The Board is duty-bound to ensure basic facilities, such as a sufficient number of toilets, access to pure drinking water, proper parking facilities for the vehicles of devotees, and a clean and hygienic environment in and around the temples. In spite of repeated directions from this Court, it appears that the Board is giving the least priority to the primary and basic needs of pilgrims. We strongly deprecate such an attitude on the part of the Board.

13. Therefore, we deem it appropriate to direct the Cochin Devaswom Board to formulate a scheme to ensure basic amenities and facilities for devotees

¹ [2007(7)SCC 482]



in each of the temples under its control and superintendence. It has been brought to the notice of this Court that there are 409 temples under the management of the Cochin Devaswom Board. Kodungalloor Bhagavathy Temple is one of the major temples of the Cochin Devaswom Board.

14. The complainant Samithy has also highlighted another important issue as to the devotee management in the temple. We have already issued detailed guidelines for devotee management of Guruvayur Temple, in **Radhakrishnan P. N. v. State of Kerala** ² in this regard. The directions issued in Radhakrishnan P.N. (supra) shall be made applicable to all the major temples under the control of Cochin Devaswom Board mutatis mutandis.

15. We therefore dispose of this DBP with the following comprehensive directions:

(i) The Board shall conduct a detailed assessment with regard to the basic facilities such as sufficiency of toilets, health sanitation, and cleanliness in each and every temple under their control.

(ii) After completing the self-assessment, the Commissioner, in consultation with the President and members of the Board, shall formulate a detailed scheme for the construction of toilet complexes for staff and the devotees. Provision shall be made for separate toilets for gents, ladies, transgenders and differently abled persons.

(iii) The Board shall come forward with an appropriate scheme to serve the devotees during festive seasons, when lakhs

² (2025 KHC OnLine 1236)



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of pilgrims assemble in and around the temple within a short span of time. The Board shall ensure the provision of sufficient bio-toilets during the annual festival.

(iv) We further direct the Board and Devaswom Commissioner to ensure that all the temples under their control shall be kept clean and tidy in all respects and the green protocols issued by the Government from time to time are scrupulously followed.

(v) We further direct the Board and the Commissioner to ensure a thorough cleaning of the temples and its premises at least once in a month.

(vi) The Devaswom Commissioner shall file an affidavit detailing the facilities available in each temple, as well as the number of devotees visiting the temple during normal periods and festival seasons within three months from the date of this order without fail.

(vii) The Board shall formulate and submit a detailed scheme for the construction of toilet complexes and restrooms within three months from the date of this order, without fail.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K. V. JAYAKUMAR
JUDGE**

Sbna/msp