



WP.CrI.(MD) No.2472 of 2026

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED : 29.04.2026

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MRS.JUSTICE L.VICTORIA GOWRI

WP.CrI.(MD).No.2472 of 2026

M.Sonaimuthu

... Petitioner

Vs.

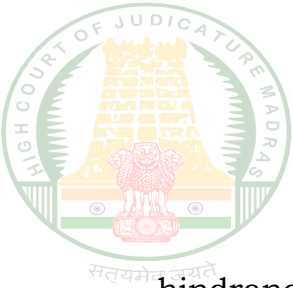
1.The Commissioner of Police,
Madurai City, Madurai.

2.The Inspector of Police,
Anna Nagar Police Station,
Madurai city.

3.The Joint Commissioner,
Arulmigu Kallazhagar Temple,
Alagar Kovil,
Madurai.

... Respondents

Prayer: Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying for issuance of Writ of Mandamus, directing the respondents to provide adequate police protection to the 3rd respondent Joint Commissioner / Executive Officer of Arulmigu Kallalagar Temple for the smooth discharge of official duties to ensure that the customary honours are conferred to the Thenur village representatives namely the seven Karaikarars without any



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hindrance and to maintain law and order during the Thenur
Mandagapadi function scheduled on 02.05.2026.

For Petitioner : Mr.V.Meenakshi Sundaram,
Senior counsel,
For Mr.S.Balaji

For R1 : Mr.S.S.Manoj,
Government Advocate (Criminal Side)

For R2 : Mr.M.Muthumanikkam,
Government Advocate (Civil)

For R3 : Mr.C.Ramesh

ORDER

Prologue:

Madurai is not merely a city of temples; it is a civilisation of memory. Its streets, riverbanks, mandapams, processions, festivals, songs and silences preserve a living archive of Tamil culture. Among the several villages which stand as sentinels of this civilisational continuity, Thenur occupies a distinctive place.

2. Thenur, a village in Madurai District, is not to be seen merely through the geography of fields and habitations. It is a village of riverine memory, agrarian dignity and cultural discipline. The



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green stretches of paddy, the rhythm of cultivation, the quiet dignity of rural households, and the collective life of its people reveal a social order deeply rooted in tradition. It is stated before this Court that the people of Thenur observe a strict social discipline, that intoxicants and tobacco are eschewed within the village, and that the village carries forward a moral imagination akin to Gandhian simplicity.

3. The connection of Thenur with Mahatma Gandhi, as placed before this Court, is not without symbolic significance. It is submitted that the sight of rural poverty and agrarian simplicity around Thenur moved the conscience of the Mahatma and contributed to his resolve to identify himself with the poorest of the poor by adopting the simplest attire. Whether recorded by history in documentary fullness or preserved by local memory with emotional fidelity, the moral message is unmistakable: Thenur is projected before this Court as a village of austerity, discipline and self-respect.

4. The said village also has an inseverable connection with the Chithirai Festival of Madurai and the sacred procession of Lord Kallazhagar to the Vaigai. The Thenur Mandagapadi is not



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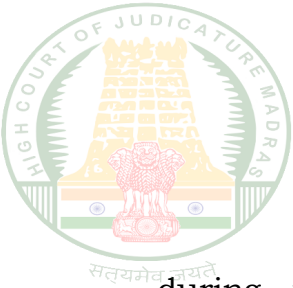
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represented merely as a local honour or a ceremonial privilege. It is presented as a bridge between village and city, between agrarian Madurai and sacred Madurai, between history and devotion, and between the people of Thenur and the centuries-old Kallazhagar festival.

5. Festivals of this nature cannot be reduced to matters of crowd control alone. They are civilisational events. They gather within themselves faith, folklore, ritual, public order, local history, community memory and collective identity. The duty of the State, in such matters, is not to create rights where none exist, nor to adjudicate intricate hereditary disputes in writ jurisdiction, but to ensure that recognised and existing customs are not disturbed by unlawful obstruction and that public peace is preserved.

Case of the petitioner:

6. The petitioner claims to approach this Court as one of the traditional representatives of Thenur village and to espouse the cause of the seven hereditary Karikaarars who, according to long-established custom and usage, are recipients of ceremonial honours



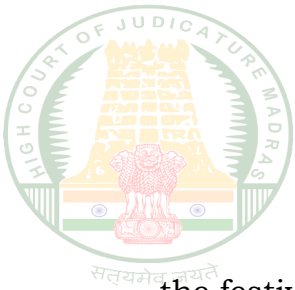
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during the Thenur Mandagapadi associated with the annual Chithirai Festival.

7. According to the petitioner, the Thenur Mandagapadi conducted at Vandiyur in the Vaigai riverbed forms an inseverable and historically significant component of the festival connected with Kallazhagar Temple, and the festival scheduled for the current year is to be held on 02.05.2026.

8. The petitioner would state that, for several centuries, as part of long-standing religious customs and usages, ceremonial honours such as honour, parivattam and allied traditional Maryadhai have been conferred upon the seven Karikaarars representing Thenur village, in recognition of their historic and customary role in the festival observances.

9. It is the petitioner's case that such customary practice is not merely based on usage but also stands judicially recognised. In this regard, reliance is placed upon the order dated 20.04.2024 passed by this Court in W.P.(MD) No.9494 of 2024, wherein continuation of



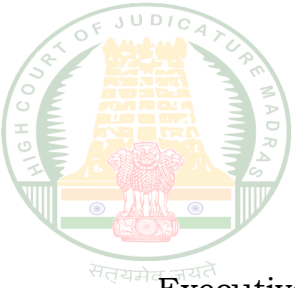
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the festival and the customary practices as followed in previous years was permitted.

10. The petitioner would further state that he was arrayed as the eighth respondent in the said writ proceedings and, according to him, the said order has attained finality and binds all concerned.

11. The grievance of the petitioner is that notwithstanding the said judicial protection, during the previous year's festival, certain individuals led by one Rajakumar and his associates allegedly obstructed the temple authorities, including the Deputy Commissioner, from conferring the customary honours upon the Thenur representatives, thereby disrupting the traditional observance.

12. It is specifically averred that there exists a genuine and reasonable apprehension that the same individuals may once again interfere with the conduct of the forthcoming festival and obstruct the temple administration, particularly the Joint Commissioner /



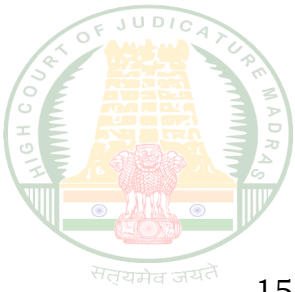
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Executive Officer, from discharging official duties and conferring the customary honours.

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13. According to the petitioner, such interference would not merely affect a private or village custom, but would amount to obstruction of an ancient public religious practice, violation of this Court's earlier orders and a potential source of breach of peace and disturbance to public order.

14. The petitioner would further state that, in anticipation of such disturbance, a representation dated 20.04.2026 was submitted to the respondents seeking preventive police protection to ensure peaceful conduct of the festival and unimpeded conferment of customary honours. Since no effective action was allegedly taken on the said representation, the petitioner has approached this Court invoking its extraordinary jurisdiction.



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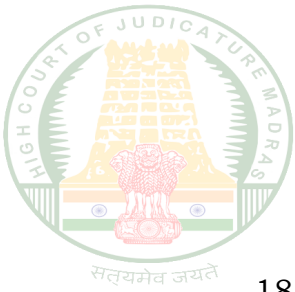
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15. It is therefore the petitioner's case that intervention of this Court has become necessary not for adjudication of any fresh right, but for enforcement and protection of an existing customary practice and for preserving law and order during the forthcoming festival.

Grounds for direction:

16. The writ petition is founded firstly on the ground that the customary honours sought to be protected are not newly asserted privileges but long-standing traditional observances recognised by usage, history and prior judicial orders, and therefore deserve protection from unlawful interference.

17. The second ground urged is that this Court, by order dated 20.04.2024 in W.P.(MD) No.9494 of 2024, has already permitted continuance of the customary practice, and any obstruction to such practice would amount to undermining and frustrating the implementation of judicial orders, warranting protective directions.



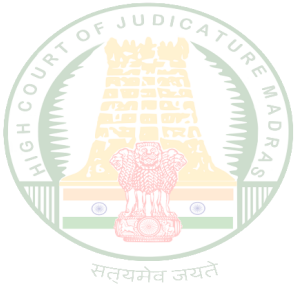
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18. The third ground is founded upon apprehended breach of peace. It is contended that in light of the disturbance allegedly caused during the previous year's festival, there exists a reasonable basis for apprehending repetition of similar obstruction, which justifies preventive intervention by this Court to preserve public order.

19. The fourth ground is that the respondents, being entrusted with maintenance of law and order, are under a public duty to ensure that lawful religious practices and recognised customs are not thwarted by private interference and that public order is preserved during a large congregational event involving lakhs of devotees.

20. The fifth ground is that the representation dated 20.04.2026 submitted by the petitioner seeking preventive police protection has not evoked any effective response, thereby necessitating issuance of a writ of mandamus to compel performance of statutory and public duties.



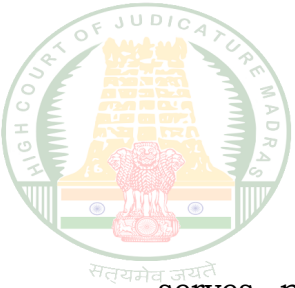
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21. The petitioner further grounds the prayer on the plea that absence of adequate police protection may result in disruption of the festival, denial of customary honours to the Karikaarars, and avoidable law and order complications affecting not only the petitioner and the villagers of Thenur, but also the larger body of devotees participating in the festival.

22. A further ground urged is that the relief sought is purely preventive and regulatory in nature and does not require adjudication of disputed civil rights, but only seeks facilitation of peaceful performance of an admitted traditional observance and protection of the temple administration in discharge of its official duties.

23. It is also contended that the prayer subserves a larger public interest, inasmuch as the Thenur Mandagapadi is projected as part of the cultural and communal harmony embedded in the Chithirai Festival and, therefore, preserving its peaceful conduct



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serves not merely private interest but public order and social harmony.

24. Lastly, it is urged that in the absence of any equally efficacious alternative remedy, and having regard to the immediacy of the festival scheduled on 02.05.2026, this Court's jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution is rightly invoked for issuance of appropriate directions.

Arguments on either side:

25. The learned counsel appearing for the petitioner submitted that the present writ petition concerns an important and ancient Mandagapadi forming part of the celebrated Kallazhagar Chithirai festival. The said Mandagapadi is known as the Thenur Mandagapadi, and it is performed at the Thenur Mandapam situated in the middle of the Vaigai riverbed.

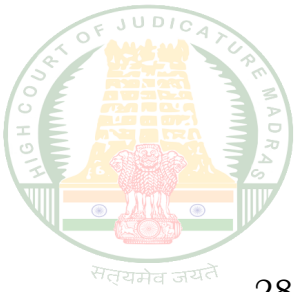
26. It was submitted that the Thenur Mandagapadi has a unique and singular significance, inasmuch as it is the only



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Mandagapadi where Lord Kallazhagar is traditionally believed to pay money and visit the Mandapam. According to the petitioner, originally, the said honour consisted of payment of 20 gold coins. Thereafter, it came to be converted into 20 silver coins, and presently, a sum of Rs.200/- is paid, along with coconut and fruits, and the same is acknowledged by obtaining signature in the relevant register.

27. The learned counsel elaborated that, prior to the Nayakar rule, the Kallazhagar festival was originally performed at the Thenur Vaigai riverbed. Later, for promoting Saivite and Vaishnavite unity, the festival was shifted to the Madurai Vaigai riverbed by royal order. When such shifting took place, the Karikaarars of Thenur consented to the same and were conferred with a special customary honour at the Mandapam in the Vaigai riverbed at Madurai. Thus, the Thenur Mandagapadi is not a mere ritual, but a symbolic recognition of the historic relationship between Thenur and Madurai.

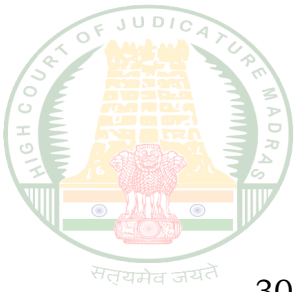


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28. It was further submitted that the Meenakshi Kalyanam festival and the Kallazhagar festival were originally separate festivals, and that the Kallazhagar festival was associated with the Thenur riverbed. After the Nayakar period, the two streams of devotion and cultural identity were brought together, thereby representing the unity of Saivite and Vaishnavite traditions. The learned counsel submitted that the honours given to the Thenur Karikaarars are traceable to such historical background.

29. The learned counsel submitted that the said custom has been in existence for more than 100 years, as borne out by the report submitted by the temple authorities before the Hon'ble Division Bench in an earlier public interest litigation filed by one Rajakumar, wherein the prayer was not to grant such Maryadhai to the Thenur Karikaarars. It was submitted that the report of the temple had been extracted in the interim order of the Hon'ble Division Bench , and upon recording the said report, the Hon'ble Division Bench had permitted continuance of the traditional practice.



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30. It was further submitted that the said writ petition before the Hon'ble Division Bench is still pending, and in the meanwhile, the custom has been protected. However, during the year 2025, when the temple authorities attempted to implement the said order and continue the traditional honour, a small group of persons from outside allegedly created disturbance at the Mandapam. As a result, the customary honours could not be properly performed and Lord Kallazhagar had to depart from the place without the completion of the customary observance. It is in the said background that the present writ petition has been filed seeking police protection.

31. The learned counsel submitted that the Thenur Mandagapadi is an identity of the people of Thenur and a reminder of their historic connection with Madurai. It is the only Mandagapadi of such nature among several Mandagapadis associated with the Kallazhagar festival.

32. The learned counsel also submitted that Thenur is historically significant not only for the Kallazhagar festival, but also as a village associated with Gandhian values. It was submitted that Mahatma Gandhi had passed through Thenur, took a solemn resolve



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there, and thereafter adopted the simple attire which became symbolic of his identification with the poor and the common people of India. It was further submitted that Thenur remains a village without a TASMAC shop and without sale of tobacco products within the village, thereby preserving a distinctive social and cultural identity.

33. The learned counsel further explained the sequence of the festival. Lord Kallazhagar descends into the Vaigai river, proceeds thereafter to the Thenur Mandapam, gives Shaba Vimochana to Manduga Maharishi near Vandiyur in the Vaigai riverbed, and thereafter the Thenur Mandagapadi is performed. The seven Karikaarars are made to stand and receive the traditional honours, whereafter the Lord leaves the Mandapam.

34. It was submitted that on 01.05.2026, Lord Kallazhagar would arrive in the morning and thereafter proceed to Rama Rayar Mandapam for the water-spraying ceremony. On the next day, namely 02.05.2026, the Lord would proceed in Garuda Vahanam from Rama Rayan Mandapam to the Thenur Mandagapadi, perform

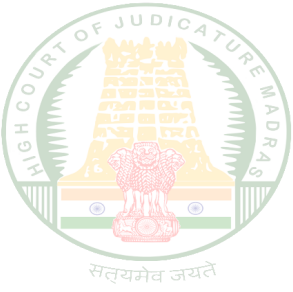


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the ritual relating to Manduga Maharishi, and thereafter return in
Sesha Vahanam.

35. The learned counsel also submitted that the Chithirai festival is not merely a religious event, but a grand celebration of Madurai's composite culture. It was submitted that Lord Kallazhagar also visits a Muslim household, where he is offered a Lungi as a garment, and this practice symbolises communal harmony. It was further submitted that the deity which goes in procession remains outside the temple for a certain period thereafter, reflecting another layer of tradition associated with Thulukka Nachiyar. According to the learned counsel, these customs are signs of harmony among communities and religions.

36. The learned counsel submitted that the petitioner seeks no adjudication of any rival civil or hereditary right in this writ petition. The only prayer is for ensuring that the traditional Thenur Mandagapadi is not obstructed by outsiders and that sufficient police protection is provided at the Thenur Mandapam, in addition to the general festival bandobust.

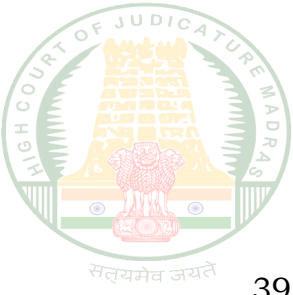


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37. The learned counsel specifically submitted that the customary honours are to be received by the seven Thenur Karikaarars by their traditional titles and not as individual private persons. The seven Thenur Karikaarars entitled to receive the Mandagapadi honours at the Vaigai riverbed from Lord Kallazhagar are:(1)Munsif Karikaarar (2)Kanakkapillai Karikaarar (3)Sethuramalinga Pillai Karikaarar (4)Nattamai Karikaarar (5)Ottadukku Karikaarar (6)Maniakarar Karikaarar (7)Servai Karikaarar.

38. It was submitted that these Karikaarars represent the traditional categories recognised by the village and that there is no present dispute among them. The petitioner's grievance is only against third parties and outsiders who may attempt to interfere with the customary honour. Therefore, the learned counsel prayed that the respondents may be directed to provide adequate police protection at the Thenur Mandapam and to ensure that the customary honours to the seven Thenur Karikaarars are peacefully performed.



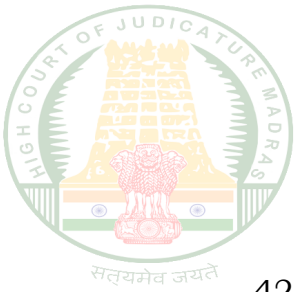
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39. The learned Government Advocate appearing for the official respondents submitted that the respondents have no objection to the peaceful performance of the customary Thenur Mandagapadi, subject to maintenance of law and order and compliance with the overall arrangements made for the Chithirai festival.

40. It was submitted that the Kallazhagar festival attracts a massive public gathering. The learned Government Advocate (Crl) submitted that for the Alagar festival alone, nearly five lakh devotees and members of the public are expected to participate, and even during the concluding portions of the festival, there would be a minimum participation of about three lakh persons.

41. The learned Government Advocate (Crl) further submitted that the Chithirai festival is the identity of Madurai and the surrounding districts. It was submitted that people belonging to all religions and communities participate in the festival, and that it is one of the rare festivals in Tamil Nadu where all sections of society jointly conduct, participate in and celebrate the event.



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42. With regard to police protection, it was submitted that police personnel are usually deployed as part of the general festival bandobust. However, it was also fairly submitted that an incident had occurred last year in connection with the honours claimed by the Karikaarars, and therefore, the request for focused protection at the Thenur Mandapam may be considered by the Court.

43. The learned Government Advocate, however, submitted that deployment of 100 additional police personnel exclusively for the Thenur Mandapam may not be practically possible, considering the large-scale security arrangements required throughout the festival route and at various Mandagapadis. Nevertheless, it was submitted that necessary and adequate police protection would be provided at the relevant place to prevent breach of peace.

44. The learned Government Advocate further submitted that the order may not record the names of private individuals as hereditary beneficiaries, as such recording may create future complications. Instead, it was suggested that the customary honour may be referred to by the traditional titles of the Karikaarars, namely



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Munsif Karikaarar, Kanakkapillai Karikaarar, Sethuramalinga Pillai Karikaarar, Nattamai Karikaarar, Ottadukku Karikaarar, Maniakarar Karikaarar and Servai Karikaarar.

45. It was further submitted that the identification of the person who would represent each Karikaarar title may be left to the established village custom and temple practice, and that the police would only ensure maintenance of law and order and prevent obstruction by outsiders.

46. The learned Government Advocate therefore submitted that appropriate directions may be issued to ensure peaceful conduct of the Thenur Mandagapadi, without conferring any fresh right upon any individual and without disturbing the pending proceedings before the Hon'ble Division Bench.

47. The learned counsel appearing for the temple/other side submitted that several writ petitions have been filed in connection



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with different Mandagapadis and customary honours forming part of the Chithirai festival. It was submitted that the temple authorities are required to conduct the festival peacefully and in accordance with established usage, but cannot adjudicate disputed hereditary or customary rights between rival individuals or groups.

48. It was submitted that if there is an admitted custom, the temple will conduct the ritual in the usual manner. However, the temple cannot be made a forum for resolving disputes as to who among different persons is entitled to receive the honour, unless such identification is made in accordance with custom, village decision or competent orders.

49. The learned counsel therefore submitted that the order may be carefully worded so as to permit the performance of the Thenur Mandagapadi and receipt of honours by the recognised Karikaarars, without naming individual persons as exclusive right holders and without giving scope for further disputes.

50. It was further submitted that the seven Karikaarars, if recognised by their traditional titles and permitted to come forward



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to receive honours in accordance with the established practice, would sufficiently protect the custom while avoiding unnecessary individual rivalry.

51. The learned counsel therefore prayed that the writ petition may be disposed of with suitable directions to the police and temple authorities to maintain peace, regulate the gathering, and ensure that the customary honours are performed without disturbance.

Point for consideration:

52. The following point arises for consideration in this writ petition:

Whether, in the light of the earlier order passed by the Hon'ble Division Bench in W.P.(MD) No.9494 of 2024, the admitted antiquity of the Thenur Mandagapadi, the apprehension of obstruction during the forthcoming Chithirai Festival, and the public duty of the respondents to maintain law and order, this Court ought to issue a Writ of Mandamus directing the respondents to provide adequate



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police protection and facilitate the peaceful conduct of the Thenur Mandagapadi scheduled on 02.05.2026?

Analysis:

53. The Chithirai Festival of Madurai is not a festival of one denomination alone. It is a public festival of history, faith, culture and common participation. The materials placed before this Court indicate that after the celestial wedding of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi, the procession of Lord Kallazhagar to Madurai, His entry into the Vaigai, His journey towards Vandiyur, His association with Manduka Maharishi and His connection with Thenur Mandagapadi together form a ritual sequence of deep antiquity and public reverence.

54. The Thenur Mandagapadi, as projected before this Court, has a special place in that sequence. It is said to be connected with the earlier location of the festival at Thenur and the subsequent shifting of the celebration to Madurai. The very existence of ceremonial honours to the Thenur Karikaarars is explained as a recognition of that historical transition. This Court is not required in



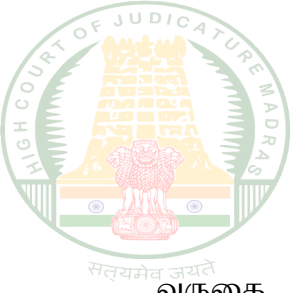
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this writ petition to pronounce upon all historical claims with the precision of a civil trial. It is sufficient to note that the custom is not a newly invented assertion, but one which has already received recognition in earlier proceedings before this Court.

55. At this juncture, it is necessary to extract the first paragraph of the interim order passed by the Hon'ble Division Bench of this Court in W.P.(MD) No.9494 of 2024, since the same records the report of the temple administration and throws immediate light upon the nature of the custom:

“Pursuant to our last order dated 18.04.2024, today, when the case is taken up for hearing, Mr.S.Manohar, learned Standing Counsel appearing for the respondent temple has submitted the following report:

”இந்திருக்கோயிலின் 1433ம் பசலி 2024ஆம் ஆண்டு சிந்திரைப் பெருந்திருவிழா வருகிற 19.04.2024 முதல் 20.04.2024 வரை நடைபெறவுள்ளது. மேற்படி திருவிழாவில் 23.04.2024ம் தேதி காலை 5.51 மணிக்கு மேல் 6.10 மணிக்குள் அருள்மிகு கள்ளழகர் வைகை ஆற்றில் எழுந்தருளுகிறார். மேற்படி திருவிழாவிற்கு தமிழகத்தில் அனைத்துப் பகுதிகளிலிருந்தும் பல்லாயிரக்கணக்கான பக்தர்கள் அழகர்கோயிலுக்கு



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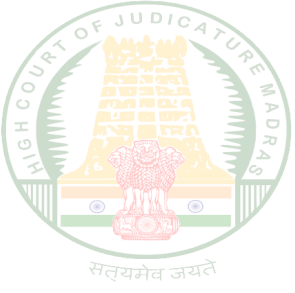
வருகை தருவார்கள். இது தமிழகத்தின் முக்கிய திருவிழாக்களில் ஒன்றாக குறிப்பிடப்பட்டு (Notified Festival) உலகம் முழுவதும் உள்ள மக்களால் அறியப்பட்டு சிறப்பாக வருடந்தோறும் கொண்டாடப்பட்டு வருகிறது.

மேற்படி சித்திரை திருவிழாவில் தாத்தரியமே. மண்டூக முனிவருக்கு சாப விமோசனம் அளிப்பதற்காகவே, அருள்மிகு கள்ளழகர் அழகர்கோவிலிருந்து புறப்பட்டு மதுரைக்கு வரும் வழிகளில் உள்ள பல மண்டகப்படிக்களில் பக்தர்களுக்கு சேவை சாதித்து இறுதியில் வண்டியூரில் வைகையாற்றின் கரையில் அமைந்திருக்கும் தேனூர் மண்டகப்படியில் கருட வாகனத்தில் எழுந்தருளி சேவை சாதிக்கிறார்.

இவ்வாறு வண்டியூர் தேனூர் மண்டகப்படியில் மண்டூக முனிவருக்கு சாப விமோசனம் வழங்கிய பின்பு, திருக்கோயில் நிர்வாகத்தால் தேனூர் கிராமத்தை சேர்ந்த ஏபகரைகாரர்களுக்கு பரம்பரையாக, பாரம்பரிய பழக்க வழக்கப்படி மரியாதைகள் தொன்று தொட்டு வழங்கப்பட்டு வருகிறது என்ற விபரம் தெரிவித்துக் கொள்ளப்படுகிறது.

(ஓம்) லெ.கலைவாணன்

துணை ஆணையர்/செயல் அலுவலர்



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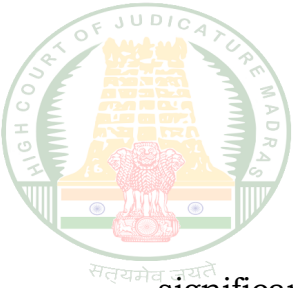
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/உண்மை நகல்/ஆணைப்படி/

கண்காணிப்பாளர்.”

56. The above report is of considerable relevance. It is not a private assertion. It emanates from the temple administration and was recorded by the Hon'ble Division Bench. It expressly states that after Lord Kallazhagar grants relief to Manduka Maharishi at the Thenur Mandagapadi in Vandiyur, honours have been traditionally given by the temple administration to the persons of Thenur village according to hereditary and traditional custom.

57. The Hon'ble Division Bench, after considering the said report, further observed that the practice of conducting the Mandagapadi at Thenur Mandapam near Vandiyur at the Vaigai River had been followed for several hundred years. It was further observed that the age-old custom could not be suddenly changed on the basis of the writ petition filed before the Division Bench. Most

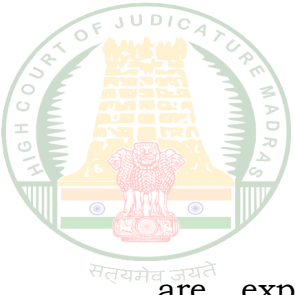


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significantly, the Hon'ble Division Bench directed that the festival, as per the custom being conducted till the previous year, should be continued to be conducted that year also.

58. This Court is conscious that the said proceedings before the Hon'ble Division Bench are stated to be pending. Therefore, this Court does not propose to decide any issue which would prejudice the pending writ petition. The scope of the present writ petition is narrow. It does not seek declaration of hereditary title. It does not seek adjudication of inter se disputes among rival claimants. It does not invite this Court to identify individual beneficiaries by name. It seeks police protection to ensure that an existing and judicially noticed custom is not obstructed by private interference and that the temple administration is able to perform its duties peacefully.

59. In matters of this nature, the distinction between adjudication of civil or customary rights and protection of public order must be carefully maintained. The former may require evidence, trial and final determination by competent forum. The latter falls squarely within the public duty of the State. When a large-scale public religious festival is scheduled, when lakhs of devotees



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are expected to participate, and when there is a specific apprehension based on the alleged disturbance of the previous year, the police authorities cannot remain passive.

60. Article 226 of the Constitution of India empowers this Court to issue appropriate directions for enforcement of legal and public duties. The maintenance of law and order during public festivals is a fundamental public duty of the State. The right of devotees to participate in a lawful religious festival and the right of temple authorities to conduct the festival in accordance with established usage cannot be allowed to be defeated by obstruction, intimidation or disorder.

61. The Government Advocate has fairly submitted that the official respondents have no objection to the peaceful performance of the Thenur Mandagapadi, subject to maintenance of law and order and the overall arrangements made for the Chithirai Festival. The submission that deployment of an excessive number of police personnel exclusively at one point may not be practically possible is



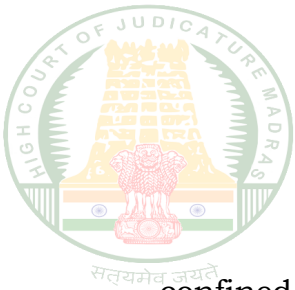
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reasonable. At the same time, the State cannot avoid its obligation to provide focused and adequate protection at a sensitive ritual point where disturbance is apprehended.

62. The submission made on behalf of the official respondents that the order may refer to the seven Karikaarars by their traditional titles rather than by individual names is also reasonable. Such a course protects the custom without converting this writ proceeding into a declaration of individual hereditary entitlement. Accordingly, this Court deems it appropriate to refer only to the traditional titles, namely, Munsif Karikaarar, Kanakkapillai Karikaarar, Sethuramalinga Pillai Karikaarar, Nattamai Karikaarar, Ottadukku Karikaarar, Maniakarar Karikaarar and Servai Karikaarar.

63. The temple administration shall perform the Thenur Mandagapadi in the usual manner and in accordance with established custom and practice, subject to the orders passed and to be passed in W.P.(MD) No.9494 of 2024. The police authorities shall not decide hereditary rights. They shall not substitute themselves for the temple administration or the village custom. Their role shall be

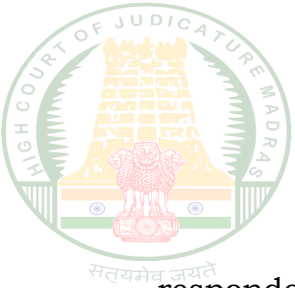


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confined to maintaining law and order, preventing obstruction, regulating the crowd, ensuring safe access and preventing any third party from interfering with the lawful discharge of duties by the temple authorities.

64. This Court also records that the Chithirai Festival represents the composite culture of Madurai. The materials placed before this Court speak of the blending of Shaivite and Vaishnavite traditions and the symbolic practices associated with communal harmony, including the association of Lord Kallazhagar with Thulukka Nachiyar. In such a festival, no person or group can be permitted to create disorder in the name of rivalry, sentiment or assertion. Devotion cannot be allowed to descend into disturbance. Custom cannot be allowed to be converted into conflict.

65. The prayer in the writ petition is preventive, regulatory and protective. It seeks implementation of existing practice and preservation of public order. Having regard to the earlier order of the Hon'ble Division Bench, the temple report recorded therein, the admitted importance of the festival, the immediacy of the event scheduled on 02.05.2026 and the fair stand taken by the official



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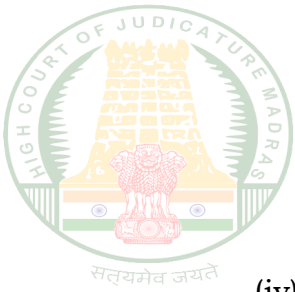
respondents, this Court is of the considered view that the writ petition deserves to be allowed with suitable directions.

66. In the result, this Writ Petition is allowed with the following directions:

(i) The respondents 1 and 2 shall provide adequate and effective police protection for the peaceful conduct of the Thenur Mandagapadi forming part of the Chithirai Festival scheduled on 02.05.2026.

(ii) The respondents 1 and 2 shall ensure that the 3rd respondent / Joint Commissioner and Executive Officer of Arulmigu Kallazhagar Temple is enabled to discharge official duties peacefully and without obstruction during the said Mandagapadi.

(iii) The 3rd respondent / temple administration shall conduct the Thenur Mandagapadi in the usual manner, in accordance with the established custom and practice followed in previous years and subject to the orders passed or to be passed in W.P.(MD) No.9494 of 2024.



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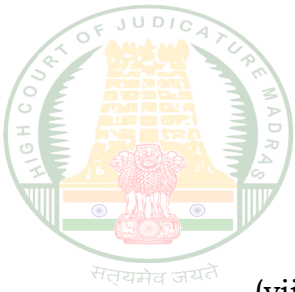
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(iv) The customary honours, including Maryadhai, payment of mandagapadi fees by Lord and allied traditional ceremonial observances, shall be permitted to be conferred upon the seven traditional Thenur Karikaarars by their traditional titles, namely, Munsif Karikaarar, Kanakkapillai Karikaarar, Sethuramalinga Pillai Karikaarar, Nattamai Karikaarar, Ottadukku Karikaarar, Maniakarar Karikaarar and Servai Karikaarar, in accordance with established practice.

(v) This order shall not be construed as declaration of any individual hereditary right in favour of any private person and shall not prejudice the rights of parties in any pending proceedings, including W.P.(MD) No.9494 of 2024.

(vi) The police authorities shall prevent any obstruction, intimidation, crowd disturbance or unlawful interference by any third party during the performance of the Thenur Mandagapadi.

(vii) The respondents 1 and 2 shall deploy such number of police personnel as may be considered adequate by the competent police authority, keeping in view the sensitivity of the ritual, the expected gathering and the alleged disturbance of the previous year.



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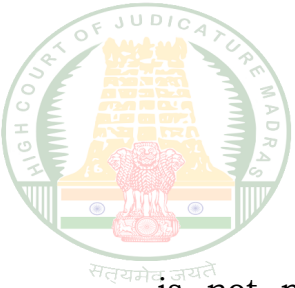
(viii) The police authorities shall regulate the movement of devotees, villagers, Karikaarars, temple servants and members of the public in such manner as to ensure safety, dignity of worship and uninterrupted performance of the ritual.

(ix) No person or group shall take advantage of this order to create any fresh claim, rivalry or obstruction during the festival.

(x) The respondents shall act upon the petitioner's representation dated 20.04.2026 in the light of the above directions and make necessary arrangements sufficiently in advance of the event scheduled on 02.05.2026.

Epilogue:

67. The Court parts with this matter with a word of caution and hope. A festival which has travelled through centuries must not be made captive to momentary disputes. The river Vaigai has witnessed kingdoms rise and fall, communities gather and disperse, and generations bow in devotion. The procession of Lord Kallazhagar



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is not merely a movement of the deity; it is the movement of Madurai's collective soul.

68. Thenur, with its agrarian grace, Gandhian memory, cultural restraint and historic connection with the Kallazhagar festival, deserves to have its traditional observance preserved with dignity. The honours conferred during the Mandagapadi are not to be viewed as ornaments of personal prestige, but as symbols of continuity, gratitude and inherited responsibility.

69. Public festivals are tests of public discipline. The true measure of devotion lies not in the loudness of assertion, but in the depth of restraint. Those who gather in the name of faith must remember that the sanctity of the ritual is preserved not by confrontation, but by order, reverence and mutual accommodation.

70. The State, the temple administration, the village representatives and the devotees shall therefore act in unison to ensure that the Thenur Mandagapadi is performed peacefully, gracefully and in accordance with custom. The Vaigai shall not be a



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witness to discord. It shall remain, as it has long remained, a flowing symbol of Madurai's faith, fraternity and cultural immortality.

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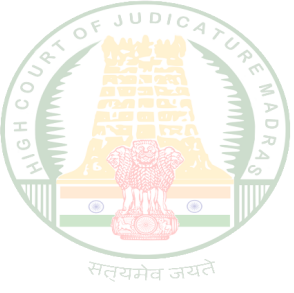
29.04.2026

NCC : Yes / No
Index : Yes / No
Internet : Yes/ No
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Note: Issue order copy on 29.04.2026.

To

- 1.The Commissioner of Police,
Madurai City, Madurai.
- 2.The Inspector of Police,
Anna Nagar Police Station,
Madurai city.
- 3.The Additional Public Prosecutor,
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court,
Madurai.



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L.VICTORIA GOWRI, J.

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29.04.2026