

**IN THE HIGH COURT FOR THE STATE OF TELANGANA
AT HYDERABAD**

HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE SUREPALLI NANDA

WRIT PETITION No.13524 OF 2026

DATE: 22.06.2026

Between :

Devagiri Venkata Rajeshwara Sharma and others

... **Petitioners**

And

The State of Telangana and others

... **Respondents**

ORDER

Heard Sri R. Chandrashekar Reddy, learned counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioners, the learned Assistant Government Pleader for Endowments appearing on behalf of the respondent Nos.1 to 5 and Sri Ch. Satish Kumar, learned Standing Counsel for Sri Someshwar Laxminarasimha Swamy Devasthanam, appearing on behalf of the respondent No.6.

2. The petitioners approached the Court seeking prayer as under:

“...to issue a Writ, Order or direction more particularly one in the nature of WRIT OF MANDAMUS declaring the action of the Respondents No. 2 to 6 more particularly the Respondent No.6 in issuing the Notification vide letter No.SSLNT/PLK/Notification/2025 dated. 23.11.2025 and not setting aside the same despite making representations dated 07.01.2026, 10.02.2026 and again on 16.03.2026 by the petitioners to the Respondents No.2 to 6, is illegal, arbitrary and violation of principles of Natural Justice, apart from violation of Articles 14, 19 & 21 of Constitution of India and also against the provisions of The Telangana Charitable and Hindu Religious Institutions and Endowments Act, 1987, and consequently set aside the notification vide letter No. SSLNT/PLK/ Notification/2025 dated. 23.11.2025 and direct the Respondent No.2 to 6 to consider the representations dated 07.01.2026, 10.02.2026 and again on 16.03.2026 made by the petitioners, and to pass such other order or orders as this Hon'ble Court may deem fit and proper in the interest of Justice.”

3. The case of the petitioners in brief as per the averments made in the affidavit filed by the

petitioners in support of the present Writ Petition is as under:-

3.1 The petitioners belong to a family that has been serving as hereditary Archakas in Sri Someshwara Laxminarasimha Swamy Devasthanam, Palakurthy, Jangaon District, for more than six generations and over 150 years, performing temple rituals in accordance with the Shaiva Agama tradition.

3.2 The respondents issued notification dated 23.11.2025 in pursuant to the Memo vide R.C.NO.C1/7/2025 dated 04.11.2025 issued by the respondents No.2, to fill up the vacant religious posts, such as, three Priest posts and one Assistant Cook post, wherein eligibility has been prescribed based on Vedika Smartha Agama, contrary to the long-established Shaiva Agama practices followed in the temple.

3.3 The petitioners submitted representations dated 07.01.2026, 10.02.2026 and 16.03.2026 requesting the Respondent authorities to correct the eligibility criteria by replacing the reference to "Vaidika Smartha Agama" with "Shaiva Agama", which is the ritual procedure traditionally

followed in the temple. However, the said representations had not been considered as on date. Aggrieved by the same, the petitioner approached this Court by filing the present writ petition.

4. PERUSED THE RECORD:

A) The relevant portion of the Memo issued by the Commissioner, Endowments Department, T.S., Hyderabad vide R.C.No.C1/362/2022, dated 15.06.2022 addressed to the Executive Officer, Sri Someshwara Lakshminarasimha Swamy Devasthanam, Palakurthy (V & M), Janagoan District, is extracted hereunder:

“In the circumstances reported by the Regional Joint Commissioner, Endowments Department, Hyderabad in the reference cited, the orders issued by the Assistant Commissioner, Endowments Department, Warangal U/s. 43(10) of the Act 30/1987 in R.Dis. No. A/1385/2021, Dated: 16-08-2021 are hereby kept in abeyance in the interest of the Institution and directed to continue the old practice as per Vaidika Smartha Agama as well as to avoid future controversies in

the matter and the Executive Officer of the subject temple is directed to take necessary action as per rules and as per the sampradayam being followed in the subject Devasthanam and report compliance.

Further, the Assistant Commissioner, Endowments Department, Warangal is hereby directed to explain the circumstances for issuance of such orders in R.Dis. NO. A/1385/2021, Dated: 16-08-2021 U/s. 43(10) of the Act without competency within a fortnight without fail.”

B) The relevant portion i.e., paragraph No.10 of the counter affidavit filed on behalf of the respondent No.6 is extracted hereunder:

“In the circumstances reported by the Regional Joint Commissioner, Endowments Department, Hyderabad in the reference cited, the orders issued by the Assistant Commissioner, Endowments Department, Warangal U/s. 43(10) of the Act 30/1987 in R.Dis. No. A/1385/2021, Dated: 16-08-2021 are hereby kept in abeyance in the interest of the Institution and directed to continue the old practice as per Vaidika Smartha Agama as well as to avoid future controversies in the matter and the Executive Officer of the

subject temple is directed to take necessary action as per rules and as per the sampradayam being followed in the subject Devasthanam and report compliance.

Further, the Assistant Commissioner, Endowments Department, Warangal is hereby directed to explain the circumstances for issuance of such orders in R.Dis. NO. A/1385/2021, Dated: 16-08-2021 U/s. 43(10) of the Act without competency within a fortnight without fail.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

5. Learned counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioners mainly puts forth the following submissions:

5.1 Since more than 150 years of long-standing hereditary tradition, the petitioners' family had been continuously performing all Archaka duties, religious rituals and temple services in Sri Someshwara Laxminarasimha Swamy Devasthanam, Palakurthy, strictly in accordance with the Shaiva Agama ritual procedure. The said practice has been followed uninterruptedly for generations and has been recognized by the temple authorities from time to time.

5.2 The age-old ritual procedure of Shaiva Agama, which has been in practice in the temple for more than 150 years, is now sought to be substituted by the Respondent authorities through the impugned notification by prescribing eligibility based on Vaidika Smartha Agama ritual procedure, which is contrary to the established customs, traditions and religious practices prevailing in the temple.

5.3 Without issuing any notice to the existing Archakas and other stakeholders, without calling for objections, and without conducting any enquiry regarding the traditional ritual practices followed in the temple, the Respondent authorities cannot alter the existing ritual procedure. Therefore, the Respondents ought not to proceed further pursuant to the notification dated 23.11.2025 and the consequential proceedings dated 23.03.2026 unless and until a decision is taken on the petitioners' objections and representations.

Based on the aforesaid submissions, learned counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioners contends that the petitioners are entitled for the relief

as prayed for by the petitioners in the present writ petition.

6. Learned Standing Counsel appearing on behalf of the respondent No.6 placing reliance on the averments made in the counter affidavit filed on behalf of the respondent No.6, mainly puts forth the following submissions:

6.1 The proceedings in R.Dis. No. A/1385/2021 dated 16.08.2021 issued by the Assistant Commissioner, Endowments Department, Warangal altered the existing ritual procedure being followed in the temple from Vaidika Smartha Agama to Shaiva Agama, and the same was recorded in the statutory register under Section 43(10) of the Telangana Charitable and Hindu Religious Institutions and Endowments Act, 1987.

6.2 The Assistant Commissioner, Endowments Department, Warangal was not competent to issue the proceedings dated 16.08.2021 under Section 43(10) of Act 30 of 1987. Consequently, the said proceedings did not attain finality and were liable to be reviewed by the competent authority.

6.3. Upon receipt of objections and on consideration of the report submitted by the Regional Joint Commissioner, Endowments Department, Hyderabad, dated 18.05.2022 the Commissioner, Endowments Department, vide Memo in R.C.No.C1/362/2022 dated 15.06.2022, kept the proceedings dated 16.08.2021 in abeyance and directed continuation of the old practice followed in the temple as per Vaidika Smartha Agama, as per rules and as per the sampradyam, in the interest of the institution and to avoid future controversies.

6.4 The petitioners have not challenged the proceedings Memo in Rc.No.C1/362/2022 dated 15.06.2022, issued by the Commissioner, Endowments Department, whereby the proceedings dated 16.08.2021 in R.Dis. No. A/1385/2021 of the Assistant Commissioner, Endowments Department, Warangal, were kept in abeyance and continuation of the existing practice was directed. Therefore, the said proceedings of the Commissioner have attained finality and continue to hold the field.

Based on the aforesaid submissions, learned Standing Counsel appearing on behalf of the respondent No.6 contends that the petitioners have to approach the respondent No.1 herein against the proceedings dated 15.06.2022 vide Memo in R.C.No.C1/362/2022 issued by the Commissioner, Endowments Department, Telangana State, Hyderabad, and therefore, petitioners are not entitled for grant of the relief as prayed for by the petitioners in the present writ petition.

7. Learned counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioners does not dispute the said submission made by the learned counsel appearing on behalf of the respondents but contends that petitioners' interest may be protected till appropriate orders are passed by the 1st respondent on petitioners representation.

8. This Court opines that it is appropriate for the petitioner to avail the remedy of appeal before the 1st respondent against the Memo in Rc.No.C1/362/2022

dated 15.06.2022, keeping the Proceedings in R.Dis.NOA/1385/2021 dated 16.08.2021 in abeyance issued by the Assistant Commissioner, Endowments Department, Warangal altering the existing ritual procedure from Vaidika Smartha Ayama to Shaiva Agama in the 6th respondent Temple.

9. Taking into consideration:

(a) The aforesaid facts and circumstances of the case,

(b) The submissions made by the learned counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioners and the learned Standing Counsel appearing on behalf of the respondent No.6,

(c) The fact that the proceedings in R.Dis. No. A/1385/2021 dated 16.08.2021, issued by the Assistant Commissioner, Endowments Department, Warangal, had already been kept in abeyance by the Commissioner, Endowments Department, vide Memo in R.C.No.C1/362/2022 dated 15.06.2022.

(d) The fact that in view of the availability of a statutory remedy of appeal under Section 93 of the Telangana Charitable and Hindu Religious Institutions and Endowments Act, 1987, before Respondent No.1, the petitioners are at liberty to avail such remedy in accordance to law.

(e) The discussion and conclusion as arrived at paragraph Nos.5 to 8 of the present order,

The Writ Petition is disposed of directing the petitioners to approach the respondent No.1 herein against the Memo in R.C.No.C1/362/2022 dated 15.06.2022 issued by the Commissioner, Endowments Department, Telangana State, Hyderabad within a period of one (1) week from the date of receipt of a copy of this order.

Upon receipt of such representation of the petitioners putting forth the objections pertaining to the Memo in R.C.No.C1/362/2022 dated 15.06.2022, issued by the Commissioner, Endowment Department, the respondent No.1 is directed to consider the same

in accordance to law by issuing notices to all concerned and pass appropriate reasoned orders, on the subject issue pertaining to the change of ritual procedure from "Shaiva Agama" to "Vaidika Smartha Agama" within a period of three (3) weeks thereafter.

Till the above exercise is initiated and concluded as per the directions as issued as above, within the time period as stipulated as above, by passing of appropriate orders by the 1st respondent duly considering the petitioners representation, the respondents are directed not to proceed further in pursuance to the impugned notification vide letter No.SSLNT/PLK/Notification/2025 dated 23.11.2025. However, there shall be no order as to costs.

Miscellaneous petitions, if any, pending in this Writ Petition, shall stand closed.

MRS. JUSTICE SUREPALLI NANDA

Date: 22.06.2026

LPD