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DBP No. 124 of 2024

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM

PRESENT

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V

&

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR

WEDNESDAY, THE 29TH DAY OF JULY 2026 / 7TH SRAVANA, 1948

DBP NO.124 OF 2024

*IN THE MATTER OF GURUVAYUR DEVASWOM - COMPLAINT AGAINST THE
CONDUCT OF 'KODATHI VILAKKU' AND OTHER SIMILAR PRACTICES AT
GURUVAYUR TEMPLE - SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED - REG*

PETITIONER :-

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENTS :-

- 1 STATE OF KERALA
REPRESENTED BY THE SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT,
GOVERNMENT SECRETARIATE, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 001
- 2 GURUVAYUR DEVASWOM MANAGING COMMITTEE
REPRESENTED BY ITS ADMINISTRATOR, GURUVAYUR DEVASWOM,
GURUVAYUR - 680 101
- 3 COMMISSIONER
GURUVAYUR DEVASWOM, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN - 695 001
- ADDL. 4 SREE GURUVAYURAPPAN EKADASHI COURT VILAKKU
CELEBRATION COMMITTEE
C/O.BAR ASSOCIATION, CHAVAKKAD- 680 506
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY



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IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL 4TH RESPONDENT
VIDE ORDER DATED 18/12/2024 IN DBP.NO.124/2024

BY ADVS.
SRI.RAJIT
SRI.V.V.JOY
SMT.SRUTHI RAJIT
SRI.AJAIY BASKAR
SRI.HEMANTH H.

THIS DEVASWOM BOARD PETITION HAVING COME UP FOR
ADMISSION ON 17.07.2026, THE COURT ON 29.07.2026 PASSED THE
FOLLOWING:



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ORDER
Dated this the 29th day of July, 2026

K.V. Jayakumar, J.

नामरूपे व्याकरोति।

Nāma-rūpe vyākaroṭi.

*Names and forms are only ways of distinguishing things;
they do not define their ultimate essence.*

This DBP has been registered on the basis of a complaint dated 13.11.2024 received from Smt. Rajeswari, Administrator, Gurubaba Ashram Guruvayur pertains to the conduct of 'Kodathi Vilakku' in Guruvayur Sree Krishna Swami temple.

2. It is stated in the complaint that despite the banning of Kodathi Vilakku in 2022, it is still continuing in the said temple. The complainant has also attached certain newspaper reports showing the inauguration of the Cultural programs held in connection with the 'Kodathi Vilakku' at Melpathur Auditorium, Guruvayur.

3. It is stated in the complaint that in connection with the 'Ekadasi' festival at Sree Krishna Swami temple, Guruvayur, 'Munsiff Vilakku' and 'Magistrate Vilakku' were organised in earlier days. Subsequently, the 'Magistrate



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Vilakku' was renamed as 'Police Vilakku'.

4. According to the complainant, the conduct of 'Kodathi Vilakku' and the celebration belittle the importance of 'Ekadashi Vratham', which should be observed with penance. The complainant further contends that the practice of organising 'Kodathi Vilakku', 'Police Vilakku', 'Postal Vilakku', 'SBI Vilakku', 'Canara Bank Vilakku', and 'Dhanalakshmi Vilakku' should be banned in the temple.

5. As per interim order dated 18.12.2024, this Court has suo motu impleaded Sree Guruvayurappan Ekadashi Court Vilakku Celebration Committee represented by the Secretary as the additional 4th respondent.

6. The 2nd respondent, the Managing Committee of Guruvayur Devaswom, has placed on record a counter affidavit. In the affidavit, it is stated that the practice of Chuttuvilakku in connection with Guruvayur Ekadashi festival has commenced during the reign of Zamoothiri Raja, the erstwhile ruler, and has been continuing till now.

7. It is stated in the counter that during the earlier times, the number of devotees visiting the temple was relatively low and the income received from the temple was not enough to meet the expensive poojas, such as Chuttuvilakku, Udayasthamana Poojas, etc. Thus, the temple sought financial



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support from the affluent families in the vicinity of the temple, Government and Semi-Government institutions, including banks, Post Office, judicial institutions, etc.

8. It is contended that during the Ekadashi festival, 18 Chuttuvilakku were lit in the temple prior to Ekadashi. One such Vilakku was conducted by the lawyers of Munsiff Court, Chavakkad, and another Vilakku, known as Magistrate Vilakku, was conducted by the lawyers practicing in the Second Class Magistrate Court. However, due to the limited number of advocates practicing in Chavakkad courts, the conduct of both the Vilakku was a difficult task. Accordingly, the conduct of "Magistrate Vilakku" was surrendered to the Guruvayur Devaswom and which is now conducted by Kerala Police as "Police Vilakku".

9. It is further stated in the counter that, nowadays the minority religious employees of the Government Departments, Banks, Post Office and other institutions are participating in the 'Ekadashi Chuttuvilakku' with great interest and emotion. A Court Vilakku Committee was constituted to celebrate the Kodathi Vilakku, and funds were collected from the members of the legal fraternity for the conduct of 'Ekadashi Vilakku'. The Guruvayur Devaswom can change the address given by the officers for the offerings, if there is a request to that effect from the offerers concerned. The Managing Committee has not so far received any such request from the Munsiff Court, Chavakkad.



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10. It is further stated in the counter that the Managing Committee is complying with all the directions issued by this Court in the matter of the conduct of Vilakku.

11. The additional 4th respondent, Sree Guruvayurappan Ekadashi Court Vilakku Celebration Committee has placed on record a counter affidavit.

12. It is stated in the affidavit that it is not known how the complainant got information to the effect that the High Court had banned the conduct of 'Ekadashi Vilakku' conducted by the 4th respondent.

13. The Advocates of Chavakkad have formed a society and registered the same under the Societies Registration Act for the smooth conduct of Ekadashi Court Vilakku celebration. The 4th respondent has placed on record a copy of the Registration Certificate, dated 26.10.88, and the Memorandum of Association of the society as Exts.R4(A) and R4(B) respectively. They have also produced Ext.R4(C), the rules and regulations of the said society.

14. Since it was difficult for the advocates practicing in Chavakkad court to accumulate the funds for the conduct of the Vilakku, it was decided to solicit funds from the members of the religious fraternity alone. After the conclusion of Vilakku, prasadam would be distributed among the members of the religious fraternity. They have placed on record a copy of the notice soliciting



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funds from the devotees for the conduct of Guruvayurappan Ekadashi Court Vilakku, which is exhibited and marked as Ext.R4(D).

15. The Court Vilakku Committee has approached this Court seeking sanction to deposit the amount collected by the committee before the Devaswom as an endowment in the name of the Munsiff Court, Chavakkad. Accordingly, this Court vide order No. D3/14383/15 dated 21.02.2015 has granted sanction to the Committee to deposit the amount collected by the Committee before the Devaswom in the name of the Chavakkad Munsiff. A true copy of the letter was produced and marked as Ext.R4(E). Pursuant to the sanction granted by this Court, an amount of Rs. 9,75,000/- has been deposited as endowment in the name of the Munsiff Chavakkad. Ext.R4(F) is the true copy of the letter issued by the Munsiff Chavakkad to the Secretary of the Committee.

16. It is contended that as the number of advocates increased and as the non-Hindu advocates were not allowed to enter the temple, the committee used to arrange the conduct of cultural activity in a stage near the temple. The sadhya is also arranged in the evening, so that all the advocate clerks and employees of courts can join and participate.

17. Furthermore, it is stated that there is a wide acceptance of the members of the legal fraternity with regard to the conduct of the Ekadasi



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Kodathi Vilakku. There is no compulsion on any Judicial Officer to attend the Kodathi Vilakku Celebrations. It is further stated that there is no active role for any Judicial Officer in the Ekadasi Kodathi Vilakku.

18. Sri. T. K. Vipindas, the learned Standing Counsel for the Guruvayur Devaswom submitted that the Kodathi Vilakku has been organised for the past several decades in connection with the Ekadashi festival of Sree Krishna Temple, Guruvayur. The learned counsel has pointed out that in earlier times, due to the financial constraints of the temple, the Chuttuvilakku was conducted in the temple with the assistance of affluent families and other institutions like banks, post offices, etc. Originally, two events were organised as 'Magistrate Vilakku' and 'Munsiff Vilakku'. Since advocates practising at Chavakkad find it difficult to organise two events, one Vilakku was surrendered to the Devaswom. Thereafter, the Magistrate Vilakku was performed by the Police Officers in the name, 'Police Vilakku'. The Munsiff Vilakku has been renamed as 'Kodathi Vilakku'.

19. The learned Standing Counsel further pointed out that the Kodathi Vilakku is observed in a secular manner and there is no compulsion whatsoever for the Judicial Officers of the District to participate in the event. In fact, the learned counsel has pointed out that even the believers of other religions would also actively participate in the programmes organised outside the temple



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premises and in the dinner hosted by the Committee in a hotel, namely, Rugmini Regency. According to him, no complaints were received from any quarters seeking to change the name of 'Kodathi Vilakku'.

20. Sri. Rajit, the learned counsel for the 4th respondent Committee submitted that a society is registered under the Societies Act namely the Sree Guruvayoorappan Ekadasi Court Vilakku Celebration Committee on 26.10.1988. He has placed on record the Certificate of Registration, the Memorandum of Association and the rules and regulations of the said Society. The event is organised by collecting funds exclusively from the members of the legal fraternity. Moreover, an Endowment is created for the conduct of the Kodathi Vilakku. An amount of Rs.9,75,000/- was also deposited in the temple as corpus fund for the conduct of the Kodathi Vilakku in the name of Munsiff, Chavakkad.

21. We have heard the submissions of the learned Senior Government Pleader, Sri. T. K. Vipindas, the learned Standing Counsel for the Guruvayoor Devaswom, Sri. Rajit, the learned counsel for the Kodathi Vilakku Celebration Committee.

22. The grievance highlighted in the complaint by Smt. Rajeshwari is that despite the fact that this Court had banned the conduct of Kodathi Vilakku



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in 2022, Kodathi Vilakku is being conducted at Sree Krishna Temple, Guruvayur. The complainant has relied on some newspaper reports and an Official Memorandum issued by this Court No.D1-3/138984/2022 dated 01.11.2022.

23. According to the complainant, a court is a secular and democratic institution established under the Constitution of India and other relevant statutes, and therefore, the courts cannot promote the activities of a particular religion.

24. This Court had issued an Official Memorandum dated 01.11.2022 as to the conduct of Kodathi Vilakku. It would be useful to extract the relevant portions of the said Official Memorandum, which reads as under :

"With reference to the above, it has come to the notice of the High Court that an event under the banner of "Kodathi Vilakku" is being hosted annually at the Guruvayur temple by an organizing committee comprising, inter alia, members of the Chavakkad Munsiff Court Bar Association. While there can be no objection to the members of the Bar Association organizing such events, either individually or collectively, the use of the name Kodathi Vilakku is unacceptable for it gives the impression that the courts in our State are in some way connected with the organization of the event. The fact that judicial officers of all ranks, including those professing other religions, feel compelled/obliged to attend the annual event that is invariably attended by the High Court Judges as well, indicates the extent to which the term "Kodathi Vilakku" can be misleading.

As secular democratic institutions under the Constitution, the courts cannot be seen engaging in activities that promote any particular religion. Accordingly, while steps are being explored to prevent the



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organizers of the event from using the name "Kodathi Vilakku" in future, the Judicial Officers in Thrissur Judicial District are advised not to actively involve themselves in the organizing of the said event, either by consenting to be a part of the organizing committee or in any other manner. They shall also not feel compelled or obliged to attend the event."

(Emphasis supplied)

25. On a perusal of the Official Memorandum, it could be seen that some directions were issued to the Judicial Officers of the Thrissur District with regard to organising and taking an active role in the event. It is further stated in the Official Memorandum that the Judicial Officers of the District shall not feel that they are compelled or obliged to attend the event. The use of the name, 'Kodathi Vilakku' was also observed to be objectionable as it gives an impression that the courts are connected with the organisation of the 'Kodathi Vilakku'.

26. Ext.R4(A) is the Certificate of Registration of the Committee named Sree Guruvayurappan Ekadasi Court Vilakku Celebration Committee dated 08.10.1988. Ext.R4(B) is the Memorandum of Association of the Celebration Committee. It would be profitable to extract the preamble and the important clauses of the Memorandum of Association :

"MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION"

Preamble: WHEREAS the Lawyers and others of the Munsiff's Court,



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Chavakkad had been conducting for the last over several decades one of the important "VILAKKUS" during the Ekadasi Festival Season in the Sree Krishna Temple at Guruvayur and whereas due to increase in expenses for the celebration of the same it was deemed necessary and proper to make a permanent and stable arrangement for the due and proper conduct of the Vilakku in a fitting manner this Association has been formed with the following objects:

1. Name: This Association shall be called "Shree Guruvayurappan Ekadasi Court Vilakku Celebration Committee, P.O.Guruvayur, PIN 680 101.
2. Office: The office of the Association shall be at the 'Hemalatha', West Nada, Guruvayur 680 101.
3. Area of Operation: Area of operation of the Association shall be the area comprised in Guruvayur Township and Chavakkad Municipality;
4. Objects:
 - a) To conduct Vilakku during the Ekadasi Festival season at the Sree Krishna Temple, Guruvayur:
 - b) To conduct such other items of Vazhivadhu in the Sree Krishna Temple, Guruvayur as the Committee decides from time to time;
5. Non-profit-making Association: The association is not intended for making any profit and as such the income shall be utilised for the purpose of conducting or celebrating the Vilakku and other items of objects as stated above. For purposes of achieving the above objects, the association may raise funds by way of contributions and donations. All such funds shall vest in the Association for achieving the objects enshrined herein:
The Association shall act in accordance with the provisions of the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (Act No. XXI of 1860)

We, the persons whose names, addresses and occupation are hereunto subscribed, are the office bearers of the association called SREE GURUVAYURAPPAN EKADASI COURT VILAKKU CELEBRATION COMMITTEE, P. O.



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GURUVAYUR, PIN 680 101.

- | | | |
|---|----------------|------|
| 1. Sri. N. Damodara Menon,
Advocate, West Nada,
Guruvayoor. | President | Sd/- |
| 2. Sri E. Gopinatha Pai,
Advocate,
P.O. Guruvayoor. | Vice President | Sd/- |
| 3. Sri. P. V. Radhakrishnan,
Advocate,
Guruvayoor. | Gen. Secretary | Sd/- |
| 4. Sri. K. Radhakrishnan,
Advocate,
Guruvayoor. | Jt. Secretary | Sd/- |
| 5. Sri A. Velayudhan
Advocate,
Guruvayoor. | Treasurer | Sd/- |
| 6. Sri T. R. Vaidyanathan
Advocate,
Guruvayoor. | Member | Sd/- |
| 7. Sri U. V. Radhakrishnan
Advocate,
Guruvayoor. | Member | Sd/- |

27. Ext.R4(C) is the Rules and Regulations of the Celebration Committee.

28. The following persons are the Members of the Association :

1. A. Velayudhan, Advocate, Guruvayoor
2. E. Gopinath Pai, Advocate, Guruvayoor
3. P. Devadas, Advocate, Chavakkad.
4. Bhanuprabas M. V., Advocate, Chavakkad.
5. K. P. Indira, Advocate, Chavakkad.



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6. T. N. Somasekharan, Advocate, Chavakkad.
7. T. B. Chandrababu, Advocate, Chavakkad.
8. R. Murali, Advocate, Guruvayoor.
9. P. V. Radhakrishnan, Advocate, Guruvayoor.
10. U. V. Radhakrishnan, Advocate, Chavakkad.
11. S. Radhakrishnan, Advocate, Guruvayoor.
12. T. R. Vaidyanathan, Advocate, Guruvayoor.
13. N. Damodara Menon, Advocate, Guruvayoor.

29. Ext.R4(D) is an appeal from the Celebration Committee to raise a corpus fund which will be deposited in the Nedungadi Bank and the Dhanalakshmi Bank so that the interests accrued therefrom will be used to accomplish the objectives of the Committee.

30. Ext.R4(E) is the communication issued by the Munsiff, Chavakkad dated 09.04.2015 stating that this Court has granted permission to deposit an amount as endowment in the name of Munsiff, Chavakkad for Sree Guruvayurappan Ekadasi Court Vilakku Celebration Committee in the Guruvayur Devaswom.

31. On a perusal of the Memorandum of Association of the Committee, it is seen that its stated object is to conduct the Vilakku during the Ekadasi festival at Sree Krishna Temple, Guruvayur. The records further indicate that the founder members of the Committee are advocates practising at Guruvayur.

32. From the submissions advanced by the learned counsel appearing



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for the parties and the materials available on record, it appears that the Vilakku is organised by advocates practising before the Chavakkad Court, though contributions are also received from Judicial Officers.

33. Having carefully considered the materials on record and the submissions made before us, we find no justification to prohibit the conduct of the Vilakku or similar events. There is no material to indicate that the event is conducted in a manner inconsistent with constitutional or institutional principles, or that any Judicial Officer is required or compelled to participate in the programme.

34. At the same time, we are of the view that the nomenclature "Kodathi Vilakku" may inadvertently create an impression of an institutional association or endorsement by the judiciary in relation to an event connected with a particular religious tradition. In the interest of maintaining the perception of institutional neutrality, it would be appropriate to consider whether a more suitable name may be adopted.

35. In the above circumstances, we are of the considered opinion that this DBP can be disposed of by directing the Managing Committee of the Guruvayur Devaswom to consider the issue of adopting a more appropriate name in place of "Kodathi Vilakku", after issuing notice to and affording an



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opportunity of hearing to all affected parties. Appropriate decision shall be taken expeditiously, in any event, within a period of three months from the date of receipt of a copy of this judgment.

The DBP is disposed of as above.

Sd/-
RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V
JUDGE

Sd/-
K. V. JAYAKUMAR
JUDGE

msh/Jvt



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APPENDIX OF DBP NO.124 OF 2024

RESPONDENT EXHIBITS

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Exhibit R4(A) | A true copy of the registration certificate issued by the registrar dated 26.10.1988 |
| Exhibit R4(B) | A true copy of the Memorandum of Association of the above society dated 26.10.1988 |
| Exhibit R4(C) | A true copy of the rules and regulations of the said society |
| Exhibit R4(D) | A true copy of the appeal brought out by the Guruvayurappan Ekadasi Court Vilakku Celebration Committee initially |
| Exhibit R4(E) | A true copy of the letter no. 504/15 dated 09.04.2015 from the Munsiff, Chavakkad to the Secretary of the Guruvayurappan Ekadasi Court Vilakku Celebration Committee |
| Exhibit R4(F) | A true copy of the letter No. 1295/15 dated 25.09.2015 issued by the Munsiff Chavakkad to the secretary of Guruvayurappan Ekadasi Court Vilakku Celebration Committee |