

**2023 LiveLaw (SC) 362**

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA**

**B.R. GAVAI; J., VIKRAM NATH; J.**

Writ Petition(s)(Civil) No(s). 202/1995; 17-04-2023

**IN RE : T.N. GODAVARMAN THIRUMULPAD versus UNION OF INDIA AND ORS.**

**The Supreme Court has expressed concerns at the unregulated number of devotees visiting places of worship which are situated in national parks and sanctuaries.**

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**ORDER**

1. Mr. K. Parameshwar, learned Amicus Curiae has submitted a note dated 17.04.2023 on Sariska Tiger Reserve on the basis of the Report of the State Empowered Committee on the Management of the Sariska Tiger Reserve and temple situated therein.
2. The note pertains to an important issue with regard to a temple situated amidst the Tiger Reserve and the number of devotees visiting the said temple.
3. The perusal of the note would reveal that the number of devotees visiting the temple every day is in the thousands, and on mela days it crosses lakhs. It is therefore, submitted that on account of unregulated entry of devotees, the management of Tiger Reserve gets adversely affected.
4. Learned Amicus Curiae has submitted that in order to overcome this situation, the entry to the forest for going to the temple should be permitted only through electric buses. He submitted that the said electric buses will carry the devotees from the entry gate of the Tiger Reserve to the temple, and in the same manner, back to the gate.
5. It is submitted that this will in turn have the effect of controlling the devotees from wandering anywhere in the forest.
6. It is further submitted that the Jaipur-Alwar State Highway between the Thankyou Board and Natni Ka Bara, having a length of around 22 kms., passes through the said Tiger Reserve.
7. Learned Amicus Curiae submitted that the Sariska Administration and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways have proposed to construct a 22 kms. elevated road so that the wildlife can freely travel from one side of the road to the other side.
8. It is further submitted that though the park is closed during monsoon season, the devotees visit the temple even during that period, which further causes difficulties in the forest management.
9. The issue as raised is also an issue of concern in some other National Parks and Sanctuaries. In many of the forests in such Protected Areas, certain places of worship are situated where the devotees come in thousands and lakhs. On one hand, it is not possible for the administration to restrain such devotees from visiting the places of worship. On the

other hand, such uncontrolled visits of the devotees results in problems with the management of such Protected Areas.

10. We find that the note prepared by the learned Amicus Curiae is an attempt to solve this critical issue.

11. We therefore, find that at least on a pilot basis, the suggestions should be considered for implementation. However, before doing so, we find that it will be necessary to hear the State of Rajasthan as well as the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways of the Union of India before any orders are passed.

12. The note submitted by the learned Amicus Curiae is therefore, treated as *suo-moto* proceedings and numbered as a separate writ petition.

13. The Registry shall issue notice to the Union of India, through the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, and the State of Rajasthan through its Chief Secretary, returnable on 12.07.2023.

14. In addition, learned Amicus Curiae is requested to inform about this order to Ms. Aishwarya Bhati, learned ASG as well as Dr. Manish Singhvi, learned AAG for the State of Rajasthan.

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