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W.P. No. 14951 of 2017

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 21.02.2024

CORAM

**THE HONOURABLE Mr. JUSTICE R.MAHADEVAN
AND
THE HONOURABLE Mr. JUSTICE P.D.AUDIKESAVALU**

**W.P. No. 14951 of 2017
and
W.M.P. No. 25253 of 2023**

Rangarajan Narasimhan
Sanathana Dharma/ Sri Vaishnavism,
Plot No. 3, I Floor, Alarmel Avenue
“Bhattar Thoppu”, Srirangam,
Trichy 620 006.

... Petitioner

-VS-

1. The State of Tamil Nadu,
Represented by its Secretary,
Department of Tamil Development Culture,
Religious Endowments & Information, Secretariat,
Fort St. George, Chennai – 600 009.
2. The Commissioner
Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department
119, Uthamar Gandhi Salai
Chennai – 600034.
3. The Joint Commissioner,
HR & CE, Thanjavur.
4. K.Krishnakumar
Executive Officer,
Shri Sowriraja Perumal Temple,
Thirukkannapuram, Nagapattinam.



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5. The Board of Trustees/Fit Person
Shri Sowriraja Perumal Temple,
Thirukkannapuram,
Nagapattinam.

... Respondents

Prayer:- Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, 1950, praying for a Writ of Mandamus, forbearing the respondents 2 to 4 from in any manner interfering in the religious affairs, established customs and usage and non-secular affairs of Shri Sowriraja Perumal Temple, Thirukkannapuram.

For Petitioner : Mr. Rangarajan Narasimhan (P-I-P)

For Respondents : Mr. N.R.R.Arun Natarajan (RR1 to 3)
Special Government Pleader

Mr. R.Bharanidharan (RR4 & 5)

ORDER

(Order of the Court was made by R.MAHADEVAN, J.)

Heard Mr.Rangarajan Narasimhan, Party-in-Person, Mr. N.R.R.Arun Natarajan, learned Special Government Pleader appearing for the first to third respondents and Mr. R.Bharanidharan, learned counsel for the fourth and fifth respondents and also perused the materials placed on record, apart from the pleadings of the parties.



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2. The relief sought in this writ petition is to issue a writ of mandamus, to forbear the respondents 2 to 4 from in any manner interfering with the religious affairs, established customs and usage and non-secular affairs of Shri Sowriraja Perumal Temple, Thirukkannapuram.

3. It is the case of the petitioner that the subject temple viz., Shri Sowriraja Perumal Temple situated at Thirukkannapuram, Nagapattinam District, Tamil Nadu, is an ancient temple and is one of the 108 Divya Desams. This temple has a rare distinction of 5 Azhwars viz., Nammazhwar, Periyazhwar, Kulasekara Azhwar, Thirumangai Azhwar and Andal, singing in praise of the presiding deity, Shri Sowriraja Perumal and a total of 120 songs out of 4000, are dedicated to this Divya Desam. It is believed by Vaishnavites that Shri Sowriraja Perumal grants salvation to those, who take refuge (complete surrender) under him. The petitioner further averred that every year, the Brahmotsavam of Shri Sowriraja Perumal is conducted in the Tamil month of Vaikasi, i.e., 9th day of the Utsavam coincides with Pournami. However, during the year 2017, without any reason, the Executive Officer of the temple cancelled the Brahmotsavam and also Balalayam of the temple, in violation of the Agama principles, thereby causing serious hurt to the religious sentiments to the people as well as Vaishnavites across the world. According to the petitioner,



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the religious affairs of the temple are absolute domain of the hereditary trustees / non-hereditary trustees / Board of Trustees of the temple in consultation with the Acharyas appointed by Swami Ramanujacharya and Swami Manavalamamunigal, Jeeyars, scholars and members of the religious community; and only the secular aspects of the temple management and its properties fall within the ambit of the provisions of the HR&CE Act. But, the fourth respondent, who is the Executive Officer of the temple, has misused his powers and interfered with the religious affairs of the subject temple. It is also stated that the fourth respondent has converted the temple and its Utsavas into a money making machinery by collecting money from the people / devotees under the guise of renovation and conducting Balalayam. Therefore, the petitioner is before this court with the present writ petition.

4. After making submissions, the petitioner ultimately, prayed to this court that the respondent authorities may be directed not to interfere with the affairs of the temple administration and appoint the person, who should be knowledgeable about the customs and practice followed by the subject temple, as fit person, if any.



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5. By way of reply, the learned Special Government Pleader appearing for the HR&CE Department, on instructions, submitted that there is no interference by the respondent authorities in the religious affairs of the subject temple; and the fit persons are appointed in accordance with the prevailing rules.

6. Recording the above submissions, the writ petition is disposed of, granting liberty to the petitioners to approach this Court, if there is any violation committed by the respondent authorities. No costs. Consequently, connected miscellaneous petition is closed.

(R.M.D., J.)

(P.D.A., J)

21.02.2024

Index: Yes / No

Speaking order/ Non-speaking order

Neutral Citation: Yes / No

Maya

To

1. The Secretary,
Department of Tamil Development Culture,
Religious Endowments & Information, Secretariat,
Fort St. George,
Chennai – 600 009.



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**R.MAHADEVAN, J.
and
P.D.AUDIKESAVALU, J.**

Maya

2. The Commissioner
Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department
119, Uthamar Gandhi Salai
Chennai – 600034.
3. The Joint Commissioner,
HR & CE, Thanjavur.
4. K.Krishnakumar
The Executive Officer,
Shri Sowriraja Perumal Temple,
Thirukkannapuram, Nagapattinam.
5. The Board of Trustees/Fit Person
Shri Sowriraja Perumal Temple,
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