

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 17th day of September 2025 / 26th Bhadra, 1947
SSCR NO. 23 OF 2025

**IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD - SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER
REPORT - SM.NO.23/2025 - REPORT REGARDING DETACHING OF GOLD COVERING OF
'DWARAPALAKA IDOLS' ON EITHER SIDE OF SREEKOVIL WITHOUT INTIMATING COURT - SUO
MOTU PROCEEDINGS INITIATED - REG.**

PETITIONER:

SUO MOTU

RESPONDENTS:

1. **STATE OF KERALA**
REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695001
2. **TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY,**
NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 003
3. **THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER**
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS, NANTHANCOD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695003
4. **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**
SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O., PATHANAMTHITTA - 689 662
5. **CHIEF VIGILANCE & SECURITY OFFICER (SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE)**
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM HEAD QUARTERS, NANTHANCOD, KAWDIAR POST,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 003
***ADDL.R6 IMPEADED**
6. **THE THIRUVABHARANAM COMMISSIONER,**
THIRUVABHARANAM OFFICE, ARANMULA, PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN- 689 533
***IS SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL 6TH RESPONDENT VIDE ORDER**
DATED 10/09/2025 IN SSCR.NO.23/2025

***ADDL.R7 & R8 IMPEADED**

7. MR. UNNIKRISHNAN POTTY,
NO. 27, SANKALP NRUSIMHA, SRIRAMAPURAM, BANGALORE,
KARNATAKA- 560021
8. SMART CREATIONS,
K34 1ST SECTOR, 10TH STREET, AMBATTUR INDUSTRIAL ESTATE,
AMBATTUR, CHENNAI, PIN- 600058

***ARE SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL RESPONDENTS 7 AND 8 VIDE
ORDER DATED 12/09/2025 IN SSCR.NO.23/2025**

***ADDL.R9 & R10 IMPEADED**

9. SENIOR DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KERALA STATE AUDIT DEPARTMENT, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM – 695003
10. STATE OF KERALA,
REPRESENTED BY THE SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM – 695001

***ARE SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL RESPONDENTS 9 AND 10 VIDE
ORDER DATED 15.09.2025 IN SSCR NO. 23/2025**

BY SRI.S.RAJMOHAN, SENIOR GOVERNMENT PLEADER

BY SRI.G.BIJU, SC, TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD

**BY SMT.SAYUJYA RADHAKRISHNAN, AMICUS CURIAE FOR SABARIMALA
SPECIAL COMMISSIONER**

BY M/S.R.SUDHISH AND M.MANJU, Advocates for Addl.R7

**THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING COME UP FOR
ORDERS AGAIN ON 17/09/2025, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT AND THIS COURT'S
ORDERS DATED 12/09/2025 AND 15/09/2025, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY
PASSED THE FOLLOWING:**

RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V. & K.V. JAYAKUMAR, JJ.

SSCR No. 23 of 2025

Dated this the 17th day of September, 2025

ORDER

Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.

This order shall be read in continuation of the earlier orders dated 12.09.2025 and 15.09.2025.

2. Pursuant to the directions contained in the aforesaid orders, the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer (Superintendent of Police) has seized certain Registers and Mahazars. The Officer, who is personally present before us, submitted that several other crucial Registers and Mahazars are yet to be secured.

3. On a careful perusal of the Mahazars already produced, it stands established that, under communication No. R.O.C.3624/95/M dated 04.05.1999, based on a letter from the Devaswom Commissioner dated 27.03.1999 (R.O.C.26431/97), the Secretary of the Travancore Devaswom Board granted sanction to the Divisional Engineer to install gold-cladded Dwarapalakas at the entrance of the Sreekovil. The document clearly establishes that the copper plates covering the Dwarapalakas were indeed gold-cladded and installed pursuant to that sanction as early as 1999. As noted in our earlier order, such cladding involved traditional methods requiring a substantial quantity of gold.

4. The Mahazar dated 19.07.2019 further records that the additional 7th respondent sought and obtained permission, at his own sponsorship, to undertake fresh gold-plating of the Dwarapalaka idols flanking the Sreekovil. Order No. R.O.C.9097/18/M dated 05.07.2019 was accordingly issued. The existing gold-cladded copper plates were removed in the presence of the Thiruvabharanam Commissioner, the Executive Officer, Sabarimala Devaswom, the Administrative Officer, the Thantri of Sabarimala Temple, the Executive Engineer, the Assistant Executive Engineer, and the Devaswom Smith. The presence of the Vigilance authorities were not secured at the time of removal of the gold cladded plates.

5. The same Mahazar records that twelve "copper plates," weighing 25.400 kg, were entrusted to the additional 7th respondent. On the following day, 20.07.2019, the "Peedams" on which the Dwarapalakas stood, two in number, weighing 17.400 kg in total, were handed over to him. The combined recorded weight of these entrusted items was therefore 42.800 kg. The records do not reveal that any Devaswom officials accompanied the 7th respondent on his journey to the premises of the 8th respondent.

6. Astonishingly, the records before us emphatically reveal that these twelve gold-cladded copper plates and the two Peedams were produced by the additional 7th respondent at Smart Creations only on 29.08.2019, more than a month and 9 days later. On that day, a mahazar was prepared in the presence of Devaswom Smith and the Superintendent, Thiruvabharanam Commissioner's Office. The 7th respondent himself signed this mahazar.

7. We are shocked to note that the mahazar of 29.08.2019 records the total weight of the said items as merely 38.258 kg. There is a glaring and unexplained reduction of 4.541 kg from the weight recorded at Sannidhanam. The only component susceptible to such diminution is the gold cladding itself. This is an alarming discrepancy demanding a detailed enquiry. There is also a possibility that the items entrusted by the 7th respondent were another set of copper plates. We also note that this reduction in weight was not reported by the Devaswom Officials, who were present at the spot.

8. After the 8th respondent completed the re-plating, yet another mahazar was drawn up, recording the weight as 38.653 kg, still approximately 4.147 kg less than the original 42.800 kg.

9. The mahazar dated 11.09.2019, produced by the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer, documenting the re-fixing of the Dwarapalakas and Peedams in the Sopanam makes even more shocking reading. Astoundingly, the weight of the items re-fixed was not recorded at all. It is an elementary and prudent procedure that when such precious gold-cladded articles entrusted with precise weight specifications are removed for plating and subsequently returned, the weight upon reinstallation must be documented. The failure can be intentional as well to ensure that these aspects did not come to light. Needless to say the failure to note is a serious flaw and points to serious administrative lapses.

10. The unexplained reduction in the weight of the gold-cladded copper plates, the casual and unsafeguarded entrustment of these valuable articles to the additional 7th respondent, the protracted and unjustified delay in their production before the 8th respondent, and the deliberate misdescription of the gold-cladded plates as mere "copper plates" in the mahazars of 19.07.2019 and 20.07.2019 together reveal a disturbing pattern of callous negligence and probable wrongdoing.

11. These irregularities are of the gravest order, striking at the very core of the integrity and transparency that must guide the administration of a temple of such sanctity and public trust. They warrant nothing less than a complete, fool-proof, and expeditious enquiry by an officer of unimpeachable diligence and integrity.

12. Accordingly, we direct the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer (Superintendent of Police) to undertake a comprehensive investigation into every aspect noted above and to place before this Court a detailed, reasoned report within three weeks from today. The Officer shall, in particular, probe the lapses highlighted in our earlier order concerning the abrupt and clandestine entrustment of the gold-cladded copper plates to the 7th respondent without prior intimation on 08.09.2025, and shall examine in depth the role, involvement, and objectives of the 7th respondent in purporting to act as a sponsor.

13. In the meantime, and as previously directed, the Officer shall specifically ascertain and report whether a second set of Dwarapalakas and Peedams is retained in the strong room, as indicated in the communications of the 7th respondent.

14. The Registers produced before this Court by the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer (Superintendent of Police) shall be returned forthwith through the Registrar (Judicial) to facilitate a thorough investigation.

15. The Travancore Devaswom Board is hereby commanded to extend its full and immediate cooperation to the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer. Any obstruction, delay, or failure to comply will be viewed with utmost seriousness.

Post on 30.09.2025.

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K.V. JAYAKUMAR,
JUDGE**

@S/17/09/25