

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM**  
**PRESENT**  
**THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V**  
**&**  
**THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE K. V. JAYAKUMAR**  
**Monday, the 29<sup>th</sup> day of September 2025 / 7th Aswina, 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**

**BY ADVS.K.B.PRADEEP, KHEMA ELIZABETH SAMUEL &  
ANEETA NIRMAL MAMEN FOR ADDL.R8**

**THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING COME UP FOR  
ORDERS AGAIN ON 29/09/2025, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT AND THIS COURT'S  
ORDER DATED 17/09/2025, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING:**

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

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**SSCR No. 23 of 2025**  
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**Dated this the 29<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2025**

**ORDER**

**Raja Vijayaraghavan V, J.**

The present proceedings arise from the report filed by the Sabarimala Special Commissioner. It concerns the unauthorized removal of the gold-cladded copper coverings of the Dwarapalaka idols and the Peedam on which those idols were fixed on either side of the Sreekovil, without prior intimation to the Special Commissioner.

2. During the course of these proceedings, we expressed our dismay at the casual and negligent manner in which the Travancore Devaswom Board dealt with the gold-cladded Dwarapalakas and Peedams.

3. In our previous orders dated 10.09.2025, 12.09.2025, 15.09.2025, and 17.09.2025, we recorded the following findings based on the inputs obtained from the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer (Superintendent of Police), Travancore Devaswom and the records made available before us:

- a) Under the Travancore Devaswom Board Sub-Group Manual, all repair work on the Dwarapalakas and Peedams was to be carried out at Sannidhanam itself. Contrary to this mandate, the revered

gold-cladded plates were handed over directly to the 7th respondent in 2019.

- b) The Dwarapalaka idols were indisputably gold-cladded in 1999. Communications No. R.O.C.3624/95/M dated 04.05.1999 and R.O.C.26431/97 dated 27.03.1999 establish that the Board's Secretary sanctioned the installation of gold-cladded Dwarapalakas at the Sreekovil entrance. Photographs taken by the Devaswom Photographer in 2013 show the Dwarapalakas, Peedam, Sreekovil, and the stairs leading to it were fully gold-cladded.
- c) The Chief Vigilance & Security Officer (Superintendent of Police) reported, after consulting the artisans who carried out the cladding, that traditional methods and multiple layers of thin gold leaves were used to withstand daily rituals and natural wear and tear. Yet, no registers detailing the quantity of gold used were maintained.
- d) Communications from the 7th respondent suggested that another set of Dwarapalaka idols was stored in the strong room. Despite diligent efforts, the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer could not locate such a set. No records exist detailing the quantity of gold used for the Dwajasthambham, Dwarapalakas, or Peedams.
- e) The mahazar dated 19.07.2019 shows that the 7th respondent, acting as sponsor, obtained permission to undertake fresh gold plating of the Dwarapalaka idols. A subsequent mahazar dated 29.08.2019 records

that the total weight of the returned items was only 38.258 kilograms. There is a glaring and unexplained reduction of 4.541 kilograms from the weight noted at Sannidhanam when the items were handed over. Since the gold cladding is the only component susceptible to such diminution, this discrepancy demands thorough investigation.

- f) A further mahazar dated 11.09.2019 reveals that the weight of the Dwarapalakas and the peedams were not recorded at the time of re-fixing in the Sopanam. This failure, whether negligent or deliberate, is unacceptable and evidences serious systemic flaws and administrative lapses.
- g) Records also show that the valuable articles entrusted to the 7th respondent under mahazars dated 19.07.2019 and 20.07.2019 were delivered to the gold-plating establishment only on 29.08.2019. This delay and the reasons for the same were ordered to be investigated to rule out any foul play.

4. The Chief Vigilance & Security Officer produced photographs taken in the year 2013, 19.07.2019, 20.09.2019, and in 2021 showing the gold cladding of the above items. Despite an exhaustive search of the strong room, no additional Dwarapalaka idols or Peedams were found.

5. On 27.09.2025, a search was conducted at the residence of one Mini, sister of Mr. Unnikrishnan Potty, near Valiyakattakkal Junction, Venjaramoodu. Gold-plated Peedams concealed in a sealed cover were

seized from her house. These were said to have been entrusted by Mr. Potty. Although the 7th respondent filed a detailed affidavit on 16.09.2025, he failed to disclose that he was in possession of the Peedams. This sensational discovery highlights the secretive and irregular manner in which valuable temple property has been handled. We are shocked by these developments and by the absence of proper documentation during the entrustment of the Peedams to the 7th respondent. The Devaswom officials are equally, if not more, culpable for placing such priceless items in the custody of a person with questionable antecedents who has deliberately suppressed material facts. The Vigilance Officer is therefore directed to continue the investigation with renewed vigor and to expose all malpractices at Sannidhanam.

6. From the submissions of the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer, we find that the details of gold ornaments, silver, precious stone, antiques and other valuables offered to the deity are entered in the Thiruvabharanam Register detailing its description, date of presentation, receipt number, and quality ascertained by the Devaswom smith. However, no registers exist for the Dwajasthambham, Dwarapalaka idols, or Peedams. There are no registers detailing the quantity of gold used for cladding. Immediate action is required to compile a comprehensive, digitized inventory of all valuables at Sannidhanam and to ascertain their current value.

7. Despite a detailed search, the Vigilance Officers have not

located the second set of Dwarapalakas kept in the strong room. Accordingly, we are of the considered view that a comprehensive inventory of all valuables including gold, silver, precious stones, and articles of antiquity, is essential. We therefore deem it appropriate to appoint Sri. Justice K.T. Sankaran, former Judge of this Court, with a request that the learned Judge engage a highly reputed and trustworthy jewel appraiser of proven expertise to conduct a thorough appraisal of all items in the strong room as well as those recorded in the Thiruvabharanam Register and the items which have been gold-cladded. The learned Judge may seek any further assistance deemed necessary after a preliminary evaluation of the work, and any such request shall be placed by the Special Commissioner before this Court for appropriate orders. The Travancore Devaswom Board shall provide all facilities and space required to enable this exercise. The objective is to secure an accurate, digitized record of the deity's property to protect against misuse or pilferage. This evaluation is solely for internal safeguarding and not for public dissemination. Upon completion of the appraisal, the learned Judge shall submit a report to this Court and shall ensure that strict confidentiality is maintained, making it clear to the appraisers that the results are to remain confidential.

8. Insofar as the ongoing preliminary enquiry as ordered by us is concerned, the Chief Vigilance & Security Officer (Superintendent of Police) shall proceed diligently and expeditiously. The Officer shall also examine the lapses by Devaswom officials who casually entrusted these priceless items without maintaining requisite registers and other

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irregularities. The investigation shall be conducted in strict confidence to ensure complete integrity of the process.

For further report, list the matter on 27.10.2025

Sd/-

**RAJA VIJAYARAGHAVAN V,  
JUDGE**

Sd/-

**K.V. JAYAKUMAR,  
JUDGE**



APM