

# VERDICTUM.IN

IN THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA AT ERNAKULAM  
PRESENT  
THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ANIL K.NARENDRAN  
&  
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE P.G. AJITHKUMAR

Thursday, the 10<sup>th</sup> day of October 2024 / 18th Aswina, 1946  
SSCR NO. 67 OF 2024

IN THE MATTER OF TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD-SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER  
REPORT-SM.NO.67/2024- REPORT SUBMITTED BY SPECIAL COMMISSIONER SABARIMALA AS  
DIRECTED BY HON'BLE HIGH COURT IN SSCR.No.64 OF 2024 DATED 05.09.2024 REGARDING  
THE SELECTION PROCESS OF MELSHANTHIS TO THE SABARIMALA SREE DHARMASHASTHA TEMPLE  
AND MALIKAPURAM TEMPLE FOR THE YEAR 1200 M.E (2024-2025)-SUO MOTU PROCEEDINGS  
INITIATED-REG :

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**PETITIONER:**

SUO MOTU

**RESPONDENTS:**

1. STATE OF KERALA  
REPRESENTED BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT,  
REVENUE (DEVASWOM) DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695001
2. THE TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD  
REPRESENTED BY ITS SECRETARY, NANTHANCODE, KOWDIAR POST  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695003
3. THE DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER,  
TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD, DEVASWOM BUILDINGS, NANTHANCODE,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PIN-695005
4. EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
SABARIMALA, SABARIMALA P.O., PATHANAMTHITTA, PIN-689662



## VERDICTUM.IN

### \*ADDL.R5 & R6 IMPEADED

5. PRAMOD M. ,  
MUNDANATTU MANA, 129/14, MAYANNUR P.O. , THALLAPPILLY,  
THRISSUR-679105
6. YOGESH NAMPOOTHIRI T.K. ,  
THEKKEDOM MANA, 204 KOORA, 204 C, TC-7/ 1217(8) MARUNTHANKUZHI,  
VATTIYOORKKAVU, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM -695 013

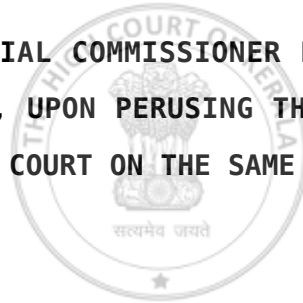
**\*ARE SUO MOTU IMPEADED AS ADDITIONAL RESPONDENTS 5 AND 6 AS PER  
ORDER DATED 10/10/2024 IN SSCR.NO.67/2024**

**BY SRI.S.RAJMOHAN, SENIOR GOVERNMENT PLEADER**

**BY STANDING COUNSEL FOR TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD**

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

**THIS SABARIMALA SPECIAL COMMISSIONER REPORT HAVING COME UP FOR  
ORDERS AGAIN ON 10/10/2024, UPON PERUSING THE REPORT AND THIS COURT'S  
ORDER DATED 09/10/2024, THE COURT ON THE SAME DAY PASSED THE FOLLOWING:**



**ANIL K. NARENDRAN & P.G. AJITHKUMAR, JJ.**

**SSCR No.67 of 2024**

**Dated this the 10<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2024**

**ORDER**

Anil K. Narendran, J.

The Special Commissioner, Sabarimala has filed this report regarding the selection process of Melsanthies of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms for the year 1200ME (2024-25).

2. On 01.10.2024, when this SSCR came up for consideration, Registry has placed a report dated 30.09.2024 of Honourable Mr. Justice T.R. Ramachandran Nair, a former Judge of this Court, who was appointed as Observer, by the order of this Court dated 05.09.2024 in SSCR No.64 of 2024, to oversee the proceedings for selection of Melsanthies of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms, at the Travancore Devaswom Board Headquarters, Thiruvananthapuram. The learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board produced a sealed cover containing the mark list, tabulation sheet and shortlist for appointment to the post of Melsanthies at Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms for the year 1200ME, along with 7 compact discs (Sabarimala-4 and Malikappuram-3).

3. Registry has received a complaint dated 30.09.2024 in

which it was alleged that a few candidates who do not have the required 10 years' continuous experience as Melsanthi, within a period of 12 years, as stipulated in the notification, were also included in the list of candidates to be interviewed. Therefore, by the order dated 03.10.2024, the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board was directed to make available for the perusal of this Court the files containing the applications made for selection of Melsanthes at Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms for the year 1200ME, along with its enclosures.

4. In terms of the directions contained in the order dated 03.10.2024, the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board has made available for the perusal of this Court, the applications made for selection as Melsanthes of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms for the year 1200 ME, along with enclosures.

5. By the order dated 08.10.2024, Registry was directed to keep in safe custody another two complaints received regarding the selection process of Melsanthes of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms for the year 1200ME. By that order, the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board was directed to make available for the perusal of this Court the

files relating to the appeals, if any, considered by the Board in terms of clause (13) of the notification for selection as Melsanthies of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms for the year 1200ME, which provides for an appeal against the recommendation of the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer.

6. Heard the learned Senior Government Pleader for the 1<sup>st</sup> respondent, learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board, who appeared online for respondents 2 to 4 and also the learned Amicus Curiae for the Special Commissioner, Sabarimala.

7. Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple, which is situated inside Periyar Tiger Reserve, is a prominent pilgrim centre in Kerala, where lakhs of devotees trek the rugged terrains of Western Ghats to have darshan of Lord Ayyappa. Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikappuram Temple come under the Travancore Devaswom Board. By reason of the custom and tradition, Melsanthies of the Temples are selected every year. The tenure of the Melsanthies is for one year from the 1<sup>st</sup> of Vrischikam to the 31<sup>st</sup> of Thulam next year.

8. In **Mohandas Embranthiri v. Travancore Devaswom Board [2001 (1) KLT 203]**, in the context of selection of Melsanthi of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha

Temple, a Division Bench of this Court held that the Travancore Devaswom Board, being a State under Article 12 of the Constitution of India, cannot choose any person as Melsanthi without any guidelines. For every year, the choosing of Melsanthi has to be done only after proper selection. The Division Bench noticed that the notification issued by the Travancore Devaswom Board inviting applications for the selection of Melsanthi of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple, for one year starting from 31<sup>st</sup> Thulam, 1176, mentions the basic qualifications necessary for being selected and that, those who have got basic qualifications will be interviewed by the Committee, which will include the Thanthri. On the basis of the interview, a short list will be prepared. The selection will be made from the candidates included in the short list on the basis of lot in front of the sanctum *sanctorum*. The Interview Board should consist of persons, who have knowledge of the subject on which questions are put. The Division Bench noticed that the purpose of the interview is to get best persons for appointment of Melsanthi at Sabarimala Temple. The knowledge of the candidates in the three topics should be assessed, which can be done with the experts in the field.

9. The issue relating to the procedure for selection of

Melsanthies of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikappuram Temple went up to the Apex Court. When a challenge was carried against earlier orders issued by this Court, the Apex Court by the order dated 15.11.2010 in Civil Appeal No.2570-71 of 2003 referred the matter for mediation. The 'Terms of Settlement' arrived at between the parties were placed on record along with the report of the Mediator. The said 'Terms of Settlement' fundamentally related to composition of selection committee for interviewing and awarding marks for selecting Melsanthies of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikappuram Temple. By the order dated 06.09.2011, the Apex Court disposed of Civil Appeal No.2570-71 of 2003 in terms of the 'Terms of Settlement' arrived at between the parties. The said 'Terms of Settlement' read thus;

"Terms of Settlement:-

1) The composition of the Selection Committee (for interviewing and awarding marks for selecting "Melsanthi" for both Sabarimala and Malikappuram temples) was one of the seriously contested issues. All parties, after detailed discussions, agreed to have the Selection Committee to consist of the following persons:

A. i) President of TDB.

ii) The Member of TDB.

iii) The remaining Member of TDB.

iv) The Commissioner of TDB.

- B. i) The Senior Thanthri of "Thazhamon Illam/Madom"  
ii) The Junior Thanthri of "Thazhamon Illam / Madom"
- C. The "Outside Thanthri" selected in the process indicated in Clause (a) of Para.2 below:
- 2) The following modalities have been agreed upon by all as to the formation of the Selection Committee:
- a. The Thazhamon Illam (hereinafter referred to as "the Illam" for short) will send up names of three persons whom they consider eminent Thanthries to TDB. Keeping those names in serious consideration, TDB will draw up a list of ten persons who are eminent Thanthries. That list will be forwarded to the Senior Raja of Pandalam Royal family (hereinafter referred to as "Senior Raja"). The latter will choose five names from the said list and forward such names to the Illam. The Senior Thanthri of the Illam will choose one of them and communicate the same to TDB. Thereupon, proceedings will be drawn up by TDB appointing the chosen person as the "Outside Thanthri" to be on the selection panel. TDB will notify the same. This panel will be valid for one year. But the same procedure will be adopted for composition of the Selection Committee thereafter also year after year, unless there is statutory intervention.
- b. It is made clear that if Illam is not sending up the names to TDB within one week of receipt of a requisition for that purpose made by TDB, it is open to TDB to prepare the panel of names and send it to the Senior Raja. Similarly, if Senior Raja is not sending the names chosen by him to the Illam, within one week of receipt of the panel from TDB, it is open to TDB to request Thazhamon Illam to choose one name from the original panel prepared by



TDB.

- c. If the Illam is not selecting one person from the panel sent by the Senior Raja (or by TDB as the case may be) within a reasonable period, it is open to TDB to choose one from the panel already formulated by them and notify him as the "Outside Thanthri" to be on the Selection Committee.

The above is only for composition of the Selection Committee. The next task is to select the "Melsanthies".

- d. TDB will make the names of all the applicants available on their web site, so that it is open to the Senior Raja to find out whether there is any blemish for any of the applicants and communicate that fact to TDB and or to the Senior Thanthri, well ahead of commencement of the selection process.

- e. Next is the preparation of a list of selected candidates after holding the interview of the applicants by the members of the Selection Committee.

While interviewing candidates for "Melsanthies" the members of the Selection Committee can award a total of 90 marks. Out of the 90 marks, 30 marks are set apart for the President, Members and Commissioner of TDB for putting such questions as are deemed necessary for eliciting general knowledge of each candidate and to test his personality. The remaining 60 marks are set apart for putting questions to elicit candidates' knowledge in Sanskrit, poojas, rites, Tanthric Rituals and other religious matters. Questions in this regard shall be put by the remaining Members of the Selecting Committee formulated above. Out of the 60 marks thus set apart for eliciting the candidates' knowledge in Sanskrit, poojas,

etc. the Unit comprising of the Senior Thanthri and Junior Thanthri of Thazhamon Illam/ Madom together can award marks up to 30. The other Unit (the "Outside Thanthri") can award marks up to 30.

f. After the Selection Committee finalises the list of selected candidates for both Sabarimala and Malikappuram the final choice will be made by draw of lot. The Senior Raja agreed to depute a male child (not above the age of ten) for Sabarimala and a female child (not above the age of ten) for Malikappuram for the purpose of drawing the lot. If male/female child for the above purpose is not deputed by the Senior Raja within a reasonable period, it is open to TDB to arrange for draw of lot in such manner as they deem fit.

3) All parties agreed that the appeals can be disposed of in terms of the above settlement."

10. In **Krishnan Namboothiri S. v. Travancore Devaswom Board and others [2015 (5) KHC 829]**, in the context of selection of Melsanthies of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikappuram Temple, another Division Bench of this Court held that, selection to the post of Melsanthi cannot be treated as a selection merely for public employment and the canvas in which grounds relating to Articles 14, 16, etc., of the Constitution of India would be etched, will not necessarily be carried, as a whole, into such matters. The scheme of the settlement and purpose of the selection to provide Melsanthies of Sabarimala Sannidhanam and Malikappuram temples have to be

borne in mind and cohesively treated while assimilating and applying the terms of the settlement. The Division Bench, though declined interference with the selection process, indicated before parting with the case that once the terms of mediation settlement came to be in operation, the guarantee to the pilgrims, believers, worshippers and the faithful followers is that the selection process once carried through the system of the terms of that settlement will give them two persons who will occupy the adorable status of being the Melsanthies of Sabarimala Sannidhanam and Malikappuram temples. When such seeds of faith are intricately connected with religion, judicial review is impermissible to embark upon and consider any rival claims in the manner as is sought to be raised in the writ petitions. This is all the more so when no breach of the Constitution of India is demonstrated.

11. In **Rajesh J. Potty v. Travancore Devaswom Board [2018 (5) KHC 220]** a Division Bench of this Court was dealing with a case which was filed by an applicant who applied to take part in the selection process leading to the appointment of Melsanthi at Sabarimala Temple. In the writ petition, it was alleged that, the petitioner is incapacitated from taking part in the process because, as per Ext.P1 notification issued by the

Travancore Devaswom Board, only a Santhi (Priest) who has had 12 years' experience, out of which, 10 years being spent continuously serving as a Melsanthi (Head Priest) of a temple would alone obtain eligibility for being selected as the Melsanthi of Sabarimala Temple. In the writ petition, it was contended that the above stipulation mandating continuous 10 years' service as Melsanthi amounts to an illegal classification among the Santhies, since it has no rationale nexus to the objective sought to be achieved by such classification. The petitioner pointed out that till 2016, there was no such stipulation in the notifications, as evidenced by Ext.P9 notification for the year 2013 and Ext.P10 notification for the year.

12. In **Rajesh J. Potty [2018 (5) KHC 220]** the Division Bench noticed that Ext.P1 notification does not provide that every Santhi who has put in 12 years' service is automatically eligible; but it additionally prescribes a condition that such Santhies should also have served as a Melsanthi in a temple for a continuous period of 10 years out of this, for being rendered eligible to be appointed as the Melsanthi of Sabarimala Temple. Such prescriptive conditions to determine eligibility of a person can, by no stretch of imagination, be seen as a sub-classification; but the 12 years continuous service as a Melsanthi

in any other temple is only a qualificational condition precedent and the fixing of such a period is intended to narrow the field of choice to the most experienced in terms of years. This becomes all the more relevant because, going by the notification, a person who becomes the Melsanthi in Sabarimala can apply again only after a period of 10 years. These are the prescriptions stipulated in the notification, not to discriminate among persons; but solely to ensure that only a person with the stature and experience behooving the sanctity and divinity of Sabarimala, which is one of the most or perhaps the most prominent temples in the country, is identified and appointed. Before the Division Bench, it was argued by the learned counsel for the petitioner that Chapter 5 of the Travancore Devaswom Manual published by the Board in the year 2011 treats 'Santhikkars' as a single class and that the provisions of a Melsanthi therein are only with respect to the volume and nature of work in a particular temple. Manual does not speak specifically about the difference between Melsanthes and other Santhes, but only that Melsanthes and Keezhsanthes are appointed in temples where there is a requirement of more than one Santhi. Before the Division Bench, it was argued by the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board that the prescription in Ext.P1 notification is in

the nature of specified qualifications for the Sabarimala Temple alone and that these prescriptions are at variance with those for other temples, since Sabarimala is not an ordinary temple, which has its own singular characteristics, which would require the best and the most experienced Santhi to be appointed as the Melsanthi. The Board, therefore, in the year 2016, thought it fit to enumerate certain adscititious conditions to identify the best candidate, by stipulating that only a person, who has 12 years' experience as a Santhi, out of which 10 years being continuously served as a Melsanthi of another temple, would obtain eligibility for being included in the field of choice for appointment as the Melsanthi of Sabarimala. Even when all these stipulations regarding qualification are obtained to a person, he only comes within the field of choice and he does not get any vested right to be appointed, since such appointment is based on a further selection in the manner as has been postulated by the Apex Court in its judgment in Civil Appeal Nos.2570-71 of 2003.

13. In **Rajesh J. Potty [2018 (5) KHC 220]**, on consideration of the aforesaid contentions on the prescription of the qualifications mentioned in Ext.P1 notification, the Division Bench found that the attempt of the Travancore Devaswom Board should always be to find the best among the Santhies, so

that he will be able to perform as a Purappedasanthi of Sabarimala Temple for a continuous period of one year. His devotion, his competence, his experience and his devoutness are all imperatively relevant criteria, which will require to be specifically and pointedly examined and assessed by the competent authorities; and in order to find the person most suitable for the post, the prescription that he should have served as a Melsanthi for a continuous period of 10 years in the 12 year period of experience as a Santhi cannot be found to be perverse in any manner.

14. The norms that only Malayala Brahmins are entitled for selection as Melsanthies of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikappuram Temple was under challenge in W.P.(C) No.26003 of 2017 and connected cases. Those writ petitions were disposed of by a common judgment dated 27.02.2024 – **Vishnunarayanan v. Secretary, Department of Revenue (Devaswom) [2024 (2) KHC SN 10 : 2024:KER: 15059]**. SLP(Civil)No.19294 of 2024 filed challenging the said judgment is now pending consideration before the Apex Court.

15. As already noticed, the qualification prescribed for selection as Melsanthi is that the applicant should be a person having service as Melsanthi for a continuous period of 10 years

out of a total period of 12 years in a temple which opens twice daily and having three poojas and where public is having right to worship.

16. In **Suo motu v. Travancore Devaswom Board and another [2021:KER:44092]** - order dated 08.11.2021 in SSCR No.5 of 2021 - this Court found that the Travancore Devaswom Board shall prescribe a format for the certificate that has to be enclosed along with the application for selection of Melsanthies of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikappuram Temple showing the required experience of the candidate in a temple which opens twice daily and having three poojas and where public is having right to worship, specifying the competent authority who has to issue such certificate in respect of the temples under the management of Travancore Devaswom Board and in respect of temples other than those under the management of the Board, where public is having right to worship. By that order, the Board was directed to take a decision in that regard, as expeditiously as possible, at any rate, within a period of four months from the date of the said order, which was directed to be placed before this Court for approval.

17. Based on the aforesaid order in SSCR No.5 of 2021, the Travancore Devaswom Board filed DBA No.5 of 2022 seeking



approval for the format of the certificate that has to be enclosed along with the application for selection of Melsanthes of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms, showing the required experience of the candidates. That DBA was disposed of by the order dated 04.07.2022 - **Travancore Devaswom Board v. Deputy Examiner for Local Fund Audit and another [2022:KER:33564]** - granting approval to the format of experience certificate (Annexure A1). In that order it was made clear that the Board shall not permit any candidate to substitute the experience certificate enclosed along with the application, which shall be specified in the format of the experience certificate and also in the notification. Paragraph 18 and also the last paragraph of the order dated 04.07.2022 read thus;

"18. Having perused Annexure A1 format of the experience certificate that has to be enclosed along with the application for selection of Melsanthes of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikappuram Temple, showing the required experience of the candidates, we find that, in Clause (4) of the format (above the column) the required qualification has to be specified, i.e., the applicant should be a person having service as Melsanthi for a continuous period of 10 years out of a total period of 12 years in a temple which opens twice daily and having three poojas and where public is having right to worship. In addition to this, the experience certificate shall bear the

full name, designation and address along with the office seal of the officer/authority issuing such certificate and also the date. The Board shall not permit any candidate to substitute the experience certificate enclosed along with the application, which shall be specified in the format of the experience certificate and also in the notification.

Subject to the aforesaid modification, we grant approval to (Annexure A1) format of experience certificate that has to be enclosed along with the application for selection of Melsanthis of Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple and Malikappuram Temple, showing the required experience of the candidates.”

18. In the report of the learned Observer, it is stated that the mark list of the individual candidates and also the tabulation sheets are countersigned by the learned Observer. The select list of candidates for selection to the post of Melsanthi of Sabarimala Devaswom consists of 25 candidates, which contains the marks secured by the respective candidates. The said select list is signed by the Devaswom Commissioner. The select list of candidates for selection to the post of Melsanthi of Malikappuram Devaswom consists of 15 candidates, which contains the marks secured by the respective candidates. The said select list is also signed by the Devaswom Commissioner. In the report, the learned Observer has stated that after the culmination of the interview all the mark sheet provided to each of the members of

the selection committee, where the marks obtained by the candidates were entered have been countersigned by the Observer and the same were entrusted to the Devaswom Commissioner for tabulation of the marks and to keep them in safe custody, as ordered by this Court in SSCR No.64 of 2024. The Observer has also countersigned all the tabulation sheets before entrusting them to the Devaswom Commissioner for safe custody. In the report, the learned Observer has also stated that during the selection process conducted on 25.09.2024 and 26.09.2024, no complaints have been raised by any of the candidates who have attended the selection process. It was conducted as directed by this Court and the whole process of interview on two days was videographed.

19. The notification issued inviting applications for selection as Melsanthies of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms for the year 1200ME (2024-25) is available in the files handed over by the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board, in terms of the directions contained in the order of this Court dated 08.10.2024. The format of the application and that of the experience certificate also form part of that notification. We notice that, despite the specific direction contained in the order of this Court dated 04.07.2022 in DBA

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No.5 of 2022 - **Travancore Devaswom Board v. Deputy Examiner for Local Fund Audit and another [2022:KER:33564]**, the Board has not chosen to make it clear in the notification issued for the year 1200ME and also in the format of experience certificate that no candidate shall be permitted to substitute the experience certificate enclosed along with the application.

20. From the files, we notice that the Board gave an opportunity to those candidates who failed to submit applications pursuant to the notification for the year 1200ME, along with an experience certificate in the prescribed format, to submit a fresh experience certificate, within a specified time limit. A few among such applicants submitted fresh experience certificates, which were taken into consideration for including their names in the list of candidates selected for the interview. We notice that such a procedure adopted by the Travancore Devaswom Board, based on a proceedings signed by the President and Members of the Board, as discernible from the files, is in violation of the specific direction contained in the order of this Court dated 04.07.2022 in DBA No.5 of 2022.

21. From the select list of candidates for the draw of lots, we notice that most of the candidates, who were granted

opportunity to substitute fresh experience certificate, could not secure the cut-off mark of 54 (60% of the total marks of 90), for inclusion in the select list for interview.

22. From the files, we notice that the applications made by one **Pramod M.**, who is Sl.No.20 in the select list of the candidates for the interview for Sabarimala Devaswom, who is also in the select list of Malikappuram Devaswom as Sl.No.12, was not recommended, by the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer, pointing out the provision contained in the notification, which provides experience in a temple, which opens twice daily and having three poojas and where public is having right to worship. Based on the rejection memo issued by the Board, the said candidate submitted an appeal along with certain documents, based on which the Board consisting of the President and Members granted permission for that candidate to participate in the interview. The reason for taking such a stand is not discernible from the files. Similarly, the application made by another candidate, **Yogesh Nampoothiri T.K.**, who is Sl.No.21 in the select list of candidates for the interview for Sabarimala Devaswom was not recommended by the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer due to absence of experience certificate for the period from 01.11.2020 to 14.11.2023. Based on the rejection

memo issued by the Board, the said candidate submitted experience certificate for the said period, based on which the Board consisting of the President and Members granted permission for that candidate to participate in the interview. The reason for taking such a stand is not discernible from the files. Such a course adopted by the Board is in violation of the directions contained in the order of this Court dated 04.07.2022 in DBA No.5 of 2022. In addition to that, from the mark sheets we notice that there is wide difference in the marks awarded by the outside Tantri, when compared to that awarded by the Senior Tantri and Junior Tantri of Thazhamon Illom/Madom. We also notice that the marks awarded by the outside Tantri in respect of a few candidates are comparable to that granted by one among the Tantries of Thazhamon Illom/Madom.

23. Having considered the materials on record and also the submissions made at the Bar, we deem it appropriate to suo motu implead abovesaid Pramod M., Mundanattu Mana, 129/14, Mayannur P.O., Thallappilly, Thrissur-679105 and Yogesh Nampoothiri T.K, Thekkedom Mana, 204 KOORA, 204 C, TC-7/1217(8) Marunthankuzhi, Vattiyoorkkavu, Thiruvananthapuram-695 013 as additional respondents 5 and 6 in this SSCR. The learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board to

furnish the e-mail ID of the said candidates, to the Registry, today itself.

24. Registry to issue notice to additional respondents 5 and 6 through e-mail, returnable by 14.10.2024. A complete set of this SSCR and a copy of this order shall be enclosed, along with the notice.

25. In the above circumstances, subject to the further orders to be passed in this SSCR, we grant permission to the Devaswom Commissioner to publish the select lists of the candidates for the draw of lots scheduled to be held on 17.10.2024 for selection as Melsanthies of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms for the year 1200ME (2024-25), subject to the condition that the inclusion of the names of additional respondents 5 and 6, namely, **Pramod M.** and **Yogesh Nampoothiri T.K.**, in those select lists will be subject to further orders to be passed in this SSCR. Their names will be included in the draw of lots scheduled to be held on 17.10.2024 only after obtaining the orders of this Court. Travancore Devaswom Board shall proceed with the draw of lots which is scheduled to be held on 17.10.2024, which shall be conducted in terms of the direction contained in the earlier orders of this Court, in the presence of the learned Observer and also the

Special Commissioner, Sabarimala.

26. Registrar (Judicial) shall keep in safe custody the sealed cover containing the report of the learned Observer and also the CDs of the selection proceedings for selection of Melsanthies of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms, for the year 1200ME (2024-25), along with the mark lists, tabulation sheets and photocopy of the select lists of the candidates for the draw of lots for selection of Melsanthies of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswom.

27. Registrar (Judicial) shall hand over the sealed cover containing the original select lists of the candidates for the draw of lots for selection of Melsanthies of Sabarimala and Malikappuram Devaswoms to the learned Standing Counsel for Travancore Devaswom Board, who shall handover the same to the Devaswom Commissioner. The Devaswom Commissioner shall publish select lists in the official website of the Travancore Devaswom Board, within two days from the date of this order.

28. Registry to communicate a copy of this order to the learned Observer. The Travancore Devaswom Board shall provide conveyance and accommodation to the learned Observer, in connection with the draw of lots, which is scheduled to be held on 17.10.2024, at Sabarimala Sannidhanam.



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List this SSCR for further consideration on 14.10.2024.

**Sd/-**  
**ANIL K. NARENDRAN, JUDGE**

**Sd/-**  
**P.G. AJITHKUMAR, JUDGE**

bkn/-

