



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Supreme Court: Roads Cannot Be Blocked for Religious Activities; Freedom Not Absolute

Published On: 30-04-2026



The Supreme Court of India has observed that public roads cannot be blocked in the name of religious activities, emphasizing that religious freedom is subject to public order. The Court stated that the State can intervene when religious practices affect secular/public life. The observation came during hearings related to the scope of religious freedom in cases including the Sabarimala issue.?

Key Highlights:

Supreme Court ruled that blocking roads for religious purposes is not permissible.

Religious freedom cannot override public convenience and order.

The State has the authority to regulate such activities if they disrupt secular functions.

Observation made by a nine-judge Constitution Bench headed by the Chief Justice.

The issue was discussed in the context of Sabarimala-related petitions on religious freedom.

Court distinguished between essential religious practices vs. secular activities.

Constitutional Provisions:

Article 25: Freedom of religion (subject to public order, morality, health)

Article 26: Freedom to manage religious affairs

Article 19(1)(d): Freedom of movement (affected if roads are blocked)

Article 21: Right to life (includes right to mobility and safety)

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Important Principle:

Religious Freedom ? Absolute Right

It is regulated when it affects public order or others' rights

Judicial Interpretation:

Courts often apply the "Essential Religious Practices Doctrine"

Only practices essential to religion get protection

Legal & Governance Angle:

State can regulate processions, gatherings, and use of public spaces

Blocking roads can violate rights of:

Emergency services

Commuters

Businesses

Related Observations:

Public roads are considered "secular spaces" and must remain accessible

Any activity causing obstruction = unreasonable restriction on public rights

Why This Judgment Matters:

Balances fundamental rights vs. public interest

Strengthens rule of law and governance of public spaces

Prevents misuse of religion for public inconvenience or disruption