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Virtual queue disrupts ritual

The introduction of the virtual queue system has adversely affected the age-old Saramkuthi ritual performed by kanni Ayyappas during Sabarimala pilgrimage. The queue starting at Sabarpeedam bypasses Saramkuthi, origin of the ritual, en route Sannidhanam thereby forcing pilgrims to perform it at Sabarpeedam. Every year kanni ayyapas shoot small arrows at a banyan tree at Saramkuthi in memory of the proposal made by Malikappurathama to Lord Ayyappa. Legend has it that Lord Ayyappa who'd renounced the world by then shot an arrow into the branch of a banyan tree under which the two stood and told Malikappurathama that he would marry her the day the tree wouldn't have any arrows stuck to it. The diversion has also affected business opportunities in Saramkuthi. "For years, Saramkuthi has witnessed a large number of devotees. But, now with the virtual queue system in place, the pilgrims are performing the ritual at Sabarpeedam," said S. Sasi, a shop owner near Saramkuthi. Former Devaswom Board president G. Raman Nair said the virtual queue should not affect the beliefs of pilgrims. "When modifications affect the beliefs of people, they should be reconsidered," he said.

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