

Legal rights of deities

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Why is it in the news?

- Recently the issue of whether deities also enjoy fundamental rights along with individuals came up in context of Sabarimala judgment.
- Legal rights
- Law, in general, recognizes **2 kinds of persons- natural and legal**. Human beings are considered natural persons whereas other things which could be given the status of a person predominantly for the purpose of Law can be categorized as Legal Persons. Thus, in this context, Courts treat Gods, corporations, rivers, animals as Juristic Persons, whenever necessary.
- Rights of deities
 - **Owning Property:** The ownership rights of the temple and the wealth gained thereof, is vested with the deity itself.
 - **Paying Taxes:** In 1969, the Supreme stated that if deities were individuals then they could pay income tax.
 - To Sue God, like human beings, can fight a legal battle. This was held in the famous Ayodhya Ram Temple case.
- In the famous Sabarimala Case (Indian Young Lawyers Association & Ors. vs. The State of Kerala & Ors, 2018), it was argued that allowing women of menstruating age into the temple would violate the right to privacy of Lord Ayyappa who is eternally celibate. However, the Court ruled that though deities have property rights, they do not enjoy any fundamental or constitutional right.