

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 14.10.2015

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE DR.JUSTICE S.TAMILVANAN
and
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE C.T.SELVAM

H.C.P.No.1685/2015

Rajagopal

...Petitioner

vs.

1. The Secretary to Government,
Food and Consumer Protection Department,
II Floor, Namakkal Kavingar Maligai,
Secretariat,
Chennai 600 009.
2. The District Collector and District Magistrate,
Villupuram District,
Villupuram.
3. The Secretary to Government,
Ministry of Consumer Affairs,
Food and Public Distribution,
(Department of Consumer Affairs),
Room No.270, Krish Bhavan,
New Delhi 110 001.

...Respondents

Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus to call for the records in connection with the order of detention passed by the 2nd respondent dated 27.06.2015 in C2/12094/2015 against the petitioner's son Gopi @ Anandhababu, son of Rajagopal, aged about 28 years, now confined at Central Prison, Cuddalore and set aside the same and direct the respondents to produce the detenu before this Court and set him at liberty.

For petitioner : Mr.V.Paarthiban
For respondents : Mr.M.Maharaja,
APP for R1 and R2
Mr.S.Arockian,
CGSC for R3

O R D E R
(Order of the Court made by S.TAMILVANAN, J.)

The Petitioner, who is the father of the detenu Gopi @ Anandhababu, son of Rajagopal, aged about 28 years, has filed this petition challenging the order of detention passed by the 2nd respondent in C2/12094/2015 dated 27.06.2015, branding the detenu as a "Black Marketeer" under the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Dangerous Activities of Bootleggers, Drug Offenders, Forest Offenders, Goondas, Immoral Traffic Offenders, Sand Offenders, Slum Grabbers and Video Pirates Act, 1982 [Tamil Nadu Act 14 of 1982].

2. Even though the learned counsel for the petitioner raised many grounds in assailing the impugned order of detention in the petition, he confined his arguments only to the ground of delay in considering the representation of the detenu, dated 05.07.2015. According to the learned counsel for the petitioner, the representation dated 05.07.2015, has been received by the Government on 15.07.2015; the remarks were called on 17.07.2015. But the said remarks were received only on 29.07.2015; after a delay of twelve days. He adds that though the file was submitted to the Under Secretary on 06.08.2015, the Minister has dealt with the said file of the detenu only on 11.08.2015, with a further delay of five days and the rejection letter was sent to the detenu only on 13.08.2015. It is his further submission that as per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there were four intervening holidays and even after giving concession as to the intervening holidays, still there is a delay of eight days, which remains unexplained. The unexplained delay in considering the representation of the detenu vitiates the detention order. In support of his contention, the learned counsel for the petitioner relied on the judgment of the Hon'ble Apex Court in Rajammal vs. State of Tamil Nadu, reported in (1999) 1 SCC 417.

3. Resisting the contention of the learned counsel for the petitioner, learned Additional Public Prosecutor submitted that the Government received the representation on 15.07.2015 and that was forwarded to the Detaining Authority, calling for remarks on 17.07.2015 and remarks were received by the Government on 29.07.2015 and ultimately, the representation was considered and rejected on 11.08.2015 and the result of the consideration was communicated to the detenu on 13.08.2015. Therefore, according to the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there is no inordinate delay in considering the representation of the detenu and therefore, he prayed for dismissal of the petition.

4. We have considered the rival submissions carefully with regard to facts and citation and perused the materials available on record.

5. As per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, on the representation of the detenu, dated 05.07.2015 which was received by the Government on 15.07.2015, remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on 17.07.2015. But, remarks have been received by the Government only on 29.07.2015 and the case of the detenu was dealt with by the Minister only on 11.08.2015, i.e., after a delay of thirteen days and thereafter, the representation has been considered by the authorities concerned and rejected on 11.08.2015. From the above, it is clear that in between 17.07.2015 and 29.07.2015, there is a delay of twelve days. Even if we give concession to the four intervening holidays, namely 18.07.2015, 19.07.2015, 25.07.2015 and 26.07.2015, still there is a delay of eight days, which remain unexplained.

6. It is trite law that the representation should be very expeditiously considered and disposed of with a sense of urgency and without avoidable delay. Any unexplained delay in the disposal of the representation would be a breach of the constitutional imperative and it would render the continued detention impermissible and illegal. From the records produced, we find that no acceptable explanation has been offered for the delay of eight days. Therefore, we have to hold that the delay has vitiated further detention of the detenu.

7. In the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Rajammal's case (cited supra), it has been held as follows:

"It is a constitutional obligation of the Government to consider the representation forwarded by the detenu without any delay. Though no period is prescribed by Article 22 of the Constitution for the decision to be taken on the representation, the words "as soon as may be " in clause (5) of Article 22 convey the message that the representation should be considered and disposed of at the earliest."

8.As per the dictum laid down by the Supreme Court in above cited Rajammal's case, number of days of delay is immaterial and what is to be considered is whether the delay caused has been properly explained by the authorities concerned. But, here eight days delay has not been properly explained at all.

9.Further, in a recent decision in Ummu Sabeena vs. State of Kerala - 2011 STPL (Web) 999 SC, the Supreme Court has held that the history of personal liberty, as is well known, is a history of insistence on procedural safeguards. The expression 'as soon as may be', in Article 22(5) of the Constitution of India clearly shows the concern of the makers of the Constitution that the representation, made on behalf of the detenu, should be considered and disposed of with a sense of urgency and without any avoidable delay.

10.In the light of the above fact and law, we have no hesitation in quashing the order of detention on the ground of delay on the part of the Government in disposing of the representation of the detenu.

11.Accordingly, the habeas corpus petition is allowed and the detention order in C2/12094/2015 dated 27.06.2015, passed by the 2nd respondent is quashed. The detenu is directed to be set at liberty, forthwith, unless his presence is required in connection with any other case.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar(J)

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

vga

To

1. The Secretary to Government,
Food and Consumer Protection Department,
II Floor, Namakkal Kavingar Maligai,
Secretariat, Chennai 600 009.
 2. The District Collector and District Magistrate,
Villupuram District, Villupuram.
 3. The Secretary to Government,
Ministry of Consumer Affairs,
Food and Public Distribution,
(Department of Consumer Affairs),
Room No.270, Krish Bhavan,
New Delhi 110 001.
 4. The Superintendent,
Central Prison,
Cuddalore.
 5. The Joint Secretary to Government,
Public (Law & Order)
Fort St. George, Chennai - 9.
 6. The Public Prosecutor,
High Court, Madras.
- 1 CC to Mr.S.Arockian, Advocate SR.No. 56356

सत्यमेव जयते

H.C.P.No.1685/2015

KJI (CO)

PSI (02.11.2015)

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