

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED: 15-06-2015

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE SATISH K. AGNIHOTRI
AND
THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE M. VENUGOPAL

W.P. Nos.16835 to 16839 of 2015 and M.P. Nos.1 of 2015

K. Kuppammal	Petitioner in WP No.16835 of 2015
M. Kasthoori	Petitioner in WP No.16836 of 2015
G. Geetha	Petitioner in WP No.16837 of 2015
K. Kuttiammal	Petitioner in WP No.16838 of 2015
K. Lakshmi	Petitioner in WP No.16839 of 2015

Vs.

- 1 State Government of Tamil Nadu
Rep. by its Secretary, Department of Revenue
Fort St. George, Chepauk, Chennai-5
 - 2 The District Collector
Kanchipuram District
 - 3 The Revenue Divisional Officer
Chengalpet Taluk, Kanchipuram District
 - 4 The Tahsildar
Thirukazhukundram Taluk
Kanchipuram District
 - 5 The Assistant Engineer
Public Works Department
Irrigation Section,
Thirukazhukundram-603 109
- Respondents in all the Wps

Writ Petitions filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India seeking a writ of certiorarified mandamus to call for the records of the fifth respondent's impugned proceedings dated 25.05.2015 and quash the same and further issue necessary direction to the respondents 1 to 4 for issuance of assignment order pertaining to the land measuring 100 m² under possession of the petitioner situated in Survey Field No.124, 115,116, 124, 115 respectively Bommarajapuram Village, Thirukazhukundram Taluk, Kanchipuram District in favour of the petitioners.

For petitioner in
all the writ petitions

Mr. A. Prabhakaran

For respondents in
all the writ petitions

Mr. P.S. Sivashanmugasundaram
Special Government Pleader

COMMON ORDER

(Order of the Court is made by SATISH K. AGNIHOTRI, J.)

All the petitioners are having commonality of facts as they are residing in Bommarajapuram Village situated in Thirukazhukundram Taluk, Kanchipuram District on the purported water canal. Thus, these writ petitions are being taken up together and decided by this common order.

2 All these petitions arise from the separate, but, identical notices dated 25.05.2015 issued under Sub Rule (1) of Rule 6 of the Tamil Nadu Protection of Tanks and Eviction of Encroachment Rules, 2007 (for short "the Rules, 2007").

3 The petitioners, claiming to be residents of Bommarajapuram Village, Thirukazhukundram Taluk, Kanchipuram District, submit that they are in legal possession and occupation of the properties spread in Survey Field Nos.33, 37, 38, 39, 112, 115, 116, 120, 124, 190, 200, 207, 208, 331, 355/27, 109, 105 and 71 of Bommarajapuram Village, which has been classified as "water canal" leading to river Palar.

4 According to the learned counsel for the petitioners, the petitioners have been in possession of the aforesaid properties for a long period and also made several representations for assignment of the said land to the District Collector, which are still pending consideration, awaiting decision and the orders of the Collector. The impugned notices under provisions of Sub Rule (1) of Rule 6 of Rules, 2007, have been issued calling upon the petitioners to remove the encroachment within a period of 21 days and in default, it was intended to remove the encroachment and impose the cost of removal of encroachment.

5 It is further contended that the petitioners have been paying property tax and other statutory taxes. The petitioners are poor villagers, having no shelter to cover their heads. Thus, the petitioners may be granted assignment of land in question. It is next contended that the Government is competent to alienate any part of tank poramboke land, which is under the control of Public Works Department without interfering with storage capacity and water quality and as such, a direction be issued to the authorities

concerned to exercise power under the provisions of Section 12 of the Tamil Nadu Protection of Tanks & Eviction of Encroachment Act, 2007 (for short "the Act, 2007"), for assignment / alienation of the said property, which is admittedly on the water canal.

6 Mr. P.S. Sivashanmugasundaram, learned Special Government Pleader, appearing for the respondents submits that the petitioners have preferred representations after the receipt of the impugned notices, which are pending consideration. The authorities will examine the said representations and decide the dispute on its own merit and pass appropriate orders. Thus, at this stage, no cause of action has arisen, seeking indulgence of this Court in the writ jurisdiction.

7 Heard the learned counsel for the parties and perused the pleadings and documents appended thereto.

8 There is no denial or dispute by the petitioners themselves that they are residing on the properties, which is classified as "water canal". Under the provisions of Act, 2007, the authorities of the Public Works Department are obliged to make survey of all tanks with reference to records available with the Revenue Department and thereafter, take necessary steps on the basis of the report of the survey officer for eviction of the encroachment. Section 12 of the Act, 2007 empowers the Government to alienate or assign any part of the tank poramboke land in public interest, without interfering with the storage capacity. The Rules framed thereunder provides for eviction of encroachment.

9 In the cases on hand, it is an admitted position that the notices, as contemplated under Sub-rule (1) of Rule 6 of Rules, 2007, have been issued, affording an opportunity of hearing to the petitioners to submit an explanation putting forth their cases. As found on a perusal of the record that explanations / representations, pursuant to the said notices, have been submitted by the petitioners. The only question which arises for consideration is as to whether this Court, in exercise of its power under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, can direct the State Government / respondents to alienate, assign the said properties, which is admittedly a "water canal", to the petitioners, who claim to be in possession of the same for a long period.

10 The lakes, rivers, forests are national wealth. They belong to the community and the same have to be protected for the benefit of the people and for the posterity. It is apt to quote the observations of the Supreme Court rendered in Intellectuals Forum, Tirupathi Vs. State of A.P. and others¹, which reads as under :

"86. The judicial wing of the country, more particularly this Court, has laid down a plethora

1 (2006) 3 SCC 549

of decisions asserting the need for environmental protection and conservation of natural resources. The environmental protection and conservation of natural resources has been given a status of a fundamental right and brought under Article 21 of the Constitution. This apart, the directive principles of State policy as also the fundamental duties enshrined in Part IV and Part IV-A of the Constitution respectively also stress the need to protect and improve the natural environment including the forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures.

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91. It is true that the tank is a communal property and the State authorities are trustees to hold and manage such properties for the benefits of the community and they cannot be allowed to commit any act or omission which will infringe the right of the Community and alienate the property to any other person or body."

11 It is the bounden duty of each and every citizen, particularly the Government, to protect the national wealth, which is in the form of water canal, pond, tank, forest, etc., and as such, no such direction can be given which erodes the national wealth and causes climatic hazard to other people and also to the posterity. However, in the facts of the case, if, on enquiry, it is found that the petitioners are hapless poor people, having no land even for house sites, the authorities are expected to consider the same and make an alternative arrangement so as to provide at least basic need of shelter. Needless to state that no eviction order can be passed without taking a final decision on the aforestated representations / explanations made by the petitioners.

12 With the aforestated observations and directions, the writ petitions stand disposed of. No costs. Consequently connected miscellaneous petitions are closed.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar

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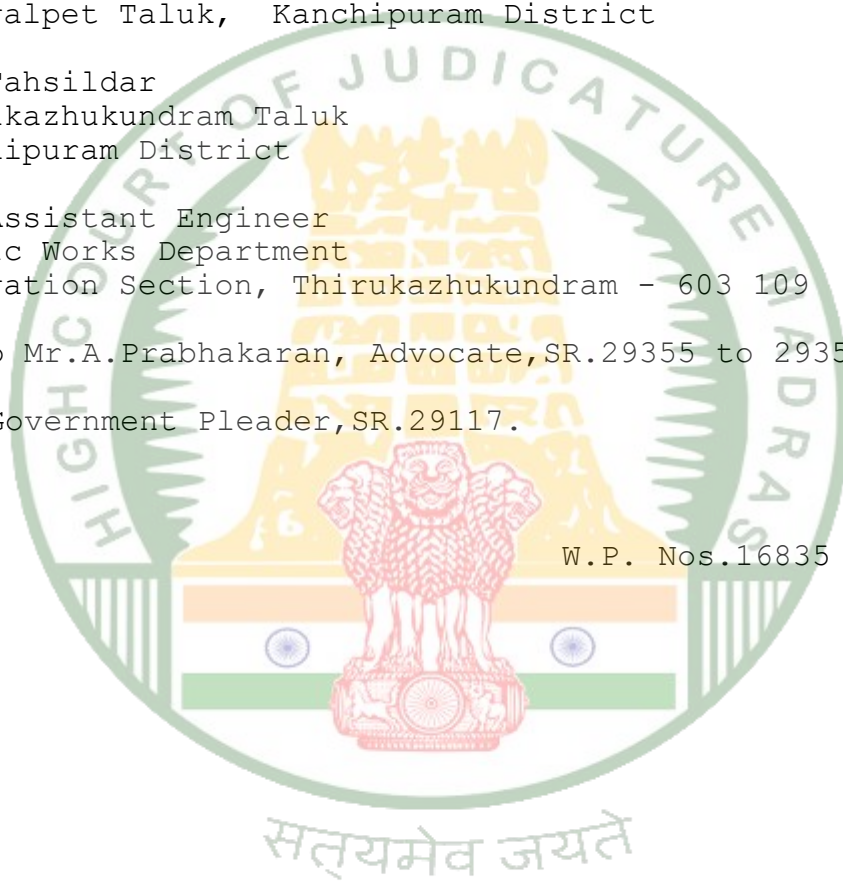
Sub Assistant Registrar

To

- 1 The Secretary
Department of Revenue
State Government of Tamil Nadu
Fort St. George, Chepauk, Chennai-5
 - 2 The District Collector
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 - 3 The Revenue Divisional Officer
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Thirukazhukundram Taluk
Kanchipuram District
 - 5 The Assistant Engineer
Public Works Department
Irrigation Section, Thirukazhukundram - 603 109
- +5 cc's to Mr.A.Prabhakaran, Advocate, SR.29355 to 29359
- +1 cc to Government Pleader, SR.29117.

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