

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 2.3.2016

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE M.JAICHANDREN
and
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE S.NAGAMUTHU

H.C.P.No.2295 of 2015

S.Sathishkumar

..Petitioner

Vs.

1. The Secretary to the Government
Home Prohibition & Excise Department
Fort St. George,
Chennai - 600 009

2. The Commissioner of Police
Chennai Police
Vepery, Chennai

3. The Inspector of Police
R1 Mambalam Police Station
Chennai - 17

... Respondents

Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus against the detention order passed by the 2nd respondent in BCDFGISSV No.787/15 dated 26.8.2015 directing the respondents to produce the detainee Lakshmi w/o.Selvam (late) aged about 46 years, who is now confined at Central Prison for Women, Puzhal, Chennai before this Court and set her at liberty.

For Petitioner : Mr.Chembulingam

For Respondents : Mr.A.N.Thambi Durai

Addl. Public Prosecutor

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O R D E R

[Order of the Court was made by M.JAICHANDREN, J.]

This Habeas Corpus Petition has been filed by the son of the detainee, namely, Lakshmi, aged 46 years, wife of Selvam (late), to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus, to call for the records in BCDFGISSV No.787/15 dated 26.8.2015, passed by the 2nd respondent, detaining the detainee, under Section 3(1) of the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Dangerous Activities of Bootleggers,

Cyber Law Offenders, Drug Offenders, Forest Offenders, Goondas, Immoral Traffic Offenders, Sand Offenders, Sexual Offenders, Slum Grabbers and Video Pirates Act, 1982 (Tamil Nadu Act 14/1982), branding her as a "Goonda", and to quash the same and to direct the respondents to produce the body and person of the detainee and set her at liberty.

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 detainee. According to the learned counsel for the petitioner, the representation of the detainee, has been received by the Government on 18.9.2015 and remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on 19.9.2015. However, the remarks have been received by the Government only on 9.10.2015, after a delay of 20 days. He adds that the file was dealt with by the Minister concerned on 15.10.2015 and the rejection letter was communicated to the detainee on 19.10.2015. It is his further submission that as per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there were 7 intervening holidays and even after giving concession as to the intervening holidays, still there is a delay of 13 days, which remains unexplained. The unexplained delay in considering the representation of the detainee 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, the learned Additional Public Prosecutor had submitted that the impugned detention order has been passed on cogent and sufficient materials and there is no illegality or infirmity in the impugned order of detention. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor had further submitted that there was no deliberate delay on the part of the authorities concerned to consider and dispose of the representation of the detainee. It is contended that such a delay is not fatal to the impugned detention order, as the authorities concerned are dealing with the file right from the date of receipt of the representation 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, the representation of the detainee was received by the Government on 18.9.2015 and remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on 19.9.2015. However, remarks have been received by the Government only on 9.10.2015,

i.e., after a delay of 20 days and the case of the detainee was dealt with by the Minister concerned on 15.10.2015 and the same was rejected on 16.10.2015. From the above, it is clear that in between 19.9.2015 and 9.10.2015, [i.e., the intermittent days between the remarks called for and the remarks received] there is a delay of 20 days. Even if we give concession to the 7 intervening holidays including Government holidays, namely 20.9.2015, 25.9.2015, 26.9.2015, 27.9.2015, 2.10.2015, 3.10.2015 and 4.10.2015, still there is a delay of 13 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 13 days. Therefore, we have to hold that the delay has vitiated further detention of the detainee.

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 13 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 detainee, 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 detainee.

11. Accordingly, the habeas corpus petition is allowed and the detention order dated 26.8.2015, passed by the 2nd respondent is quashed. The detainee is directed to be set at liberty, forthwith, unless her presence is required in connection with any other case.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar(CS II)

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

To:

1. The Secretary to the Government
Home Prohibition & Excise Department
Fort St. George,
Chennai - 600 009
2. The Commissioner of Police
Chennai Police
Vepery, Chennai
3. The Inspector of Police
R1 Mambalam Police Station
Chennai - 17
4. The Superintendent, Central Prison,
Puzhal, Chennai.
5. The Joint Secretary to Government Public
(Law & order), Fort St. George, Chennai. 600 009.
6. The Public Prosecutor, High Court, Madras.

H.C.P.No.2295 of 2015

KK(CO)

Eu 23.03.16