IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 01.11.2016

CORAM

THE HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE M.JAICHANDREN
and
THE HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE S.BASKARAN

H.C.P.No.948 of 2016

Clara .. Petitioner

Vs

1. State of Tamilnadu,
Rep. by the Secretary, Home,
Prohibition and Excise Department,
Fort St. George, Chennai-600 009.

2. The Commissioner of Police,
The Commissioner Office,
Vepery, Chennai-600 007. .. Respondents

Prayer: Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying to issue a WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS, calling for the records relating to the detention order in Memo No.415/BCDFGISSV/2016, dated 12.04.2016 passed by the 2nd respondent under the Tamilnadu Act 14 of 1982 and set aside the same and direct the respondent to produce the petitioner's son Thiru.Suriya S/o.Anandan aged about 23 years the detenu, now confined in Central Prison, Puzhal, Chennai, before this Hon'ble Court and set the petitioner's grandson Thiru.Suriya, S/o.Anandan, aged about 23 years the detenu herein at liberty and pass such further or appropriate order.

For Petitioner : Mr.R.Muthukumar

For Respondents: Mr.V.M.R.Rajentren
Additional Public Prosecutor

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ORDER

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

This Habeas Corpus Petition has been filed by the grand mother of the detenu, namely, Surya, son of Anandan, aged about 23 years, to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus, to call for the records, in Detention Order No.415/BCDFGISSSV/2016, dated

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12.04.2016, passed by the second respondent herein, detaining the detenu, 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 him as a "Goonda", in the Central Prison, Puzhal, Chennai, and to quash the same and to direct the respondents to produce the body and person of the detenu and set him 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 detenu. According to the learned counsel for the petitioner, the representation of the detenu, has been received by the Government, on 28.4.2016, and the remarks have been called for from the detaining authority, on 28.4.2016. However, the remarks have been received by the Government only on 6.5.2016, after a delay of 8 days. He adds that the file was dealt with by the Minister concerned, on 17.5.2016 and the rejection letter was communicated to the detenu, on 19.5.2016. It is his further submission that as per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there were 6 intervening holidays and even after giving concession as to the intervening holidays, still there is a delay of 13 days, which remains unexplained. Thus, there is delay at different stages while considering the representation of the detenu. 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, 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 detenu. 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.

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5. As per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, the representation of the detenu was received by the Government on 28.4.2016 and the remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on 28.4.2016. However, remarks have been received by the Government only on 6.5.2016, i.e., after a delay of 8 days and the case of the detenu was dealt with by the Minister concerned on 17.5.2016 and the same was rejected on 18.5.2016. From the above, it is clear that in between 28.4.2016 and 6.5.2016, [i.e., the intermittent days between the remarks called for and the remarks received] there is a delay of 8 days. Thus, there is delay at different stages while considering the representation of the detenu. Even if we give concession to the 6 intervening holidays including Government holidays, namely 30.4.2016, 1.5.2016, 7.5.2016, 8.5.2016, 14.5.2016 and 15.5.2016, 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 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 13 days delay has not been properly explained at all.

9. Further, in a decision in Ummu Sabeena vs. State of Kerala reported in (2011) 10 SCC 781, 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

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'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 dated 12.4.2016, passed by the second 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(CO)

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

vvk
To

1. The Secretary,
   State of Tamilnadu, Home,
   Prohibition and Excise Department,
   Fort St. George, Chennai-600 009.
2. The Commissioner of Police,
   The Commissioner Office,
   Vepery, Chennai-600 007.

3. The Superintendent, Central Prison, Puzhal,
   (Induplicate for Communication to detenue)

4. The Joint Secretary to Government,
   Public(Law & Order),
   Fort Saint George, Chennai - 9.

5.The Public Prosecutor,
   High Court, Madras.

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SSK(CO)
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