

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

Dated:24.07.2017

Coram

THE HONOURABLE Mr. JUSTICE M.VENUGOPAL
AND
THE HONOURABLE Mr. JUSTICE P.D.AUDIKESAVALU

W.P.No.15330 of 2017 and
W.M.P.No.16621 of 2017

R.Karthikeyan

... Petitioner

Vs

The Revenue Divisional Officer,
Harur,
Dharmapuri District.

... Respondent

Prayer: Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying for issuance of Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus to call for the records relating to the impugned proceedings issued Respondent in Pa.Mu.641/2015 (A1), dated 03.07.2015 and to quash the same and consequently directing the respondent to issue S.T.Kurumans Community Certificate in favour of Petitioner based on the Community Certificate issued in favour of petitioner's brother R.Sivakumar as declared as genuine as per the State Level Scrutiny Committee in Proceedings No.16943/CVIII/2014 dated 06.03.2015.

For Petitioner : Mr.G.Sankaran

For Respondent : Mr.K.Venkataramani
Additional Advocate General

For Mr.M.Elumalai
Government Advocate

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O R D E R

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

Heard both sides.

2.The Petitioner has filed the present Writ Petition praying for passing of an order by this Court in calling for the records pertaining to the impugned proceedings issued by the Respondent

in Proceedings No.Pa.Mu.641/2015(A1) dated 03.07.2015 and to quash the same. Also, the Petitioner has prayed for issuance of direction by this Court in directing the Respondent/Revenue Divisional Officer, Harur, Dharmapuri District to issue S.T. Kurumans Community Certificate in his favour, of course, based on the Community Certificate issued in favour of his brother R.Sivakumar, whose Community Certificate as 'Hindu Kurumans (ST)' was declared to be genuine by the State Level Scrutiny Committee Proceedings dated 06.03.2015.

3.The grievance of the Petitioner is that the Community Certificate issued in favour of his brother R.Sivakumar, who is serving as Teacher in Vellore District, was sent for verification to the State Level Scrutiny Committee and the Committee, after conducting due enquiry, passed orders on 06.03.2015 declaring that his brother R.Sivakumar belonging to Hindu Kurumans (ST) Community and accordingly, issued a certificate in his favour on 23.07.1996 by the Revenue Divisional Officer concerned. Further, the Revenue Divisional Officer, Dharmapuri had declared the certificate to be a genuine one.

4.According to the Petitioner, his two children, one son by name K.Sanjay Kumar and one daughter by name K.Divya, studying in X standard and VII standard respectively, are in need of Community Certificate. Moreover, with a view to avail the loan from any Nationalised Bank to submit the Community Certificate thereto and to establish that the Petitioner belongs to ST Kurumans Community and further, for the purpose of his children education etc., they require the Community Certificate and accordingly, he made an application before the Respondent/Revenue Divisional Officer, Harur seeking issuance of Community Certificate in his favour and in favour of his children by enclosing the ST Kurumans Community Certificate issued in favour of his brother R.Sivakumar, S/o.Ramalingam belonging to Hindu Kurumans Scheduled Tribes Community.

5.It comes to be known that based on the application projected by the Petitioner before the Respondent as early as on 09.04.2015, due enquiry was conducted on 15.05.2015 and final order was passed on 03.07.2015 by the Respondent rejecting his claim for issuance of S.T. Kurumans Community Certificate in his favour and in favour of his children by assigning certain reasons that are not connected to him and not germane for the purpose of consideration.

6.In this connection, the Learned Counsel for the Petitioner projects an argument that as per Admission Register of Panchayat Union Elementary School, Paiyarnatham, one Rajendran, S/o.Chinnathambi, who is stated to have his cousin brother, in respect of him, his caste was entered as 'Kurumbar'. Also, the impugned order refers the entries made in the Birth and Death

Register of Paiyarnatham Village, Pappireddipatti Taluk prior to 1976 as 'Kurumbar' instead of 'Kurumans' for the persons who may be related to the Petitioner. Apart from that, in the school records prior to 1976, it is mentioned as 'Kurumbar', who may be relative to the Petitioner and in fact, there was no entry as 'Kurumans'. It is the case of the Petitioner that he had not produced any document pertaining to entries to Birth and Death Register or school records made prior to 1976 and it is found that the Respondent is referring to certain reasons in the order which was stated in all the orders issued by the Respondent.

7.The trump card for the Petitioner is that when his brother R.Sivakumar S/o.Ramalingam was issued with a Hindu Kurumans (ST) Community as per the certificate of R.D.O., Dharmapuri dated 23.07.1996 and when that certificate was found to be genuine and the same is still not yet cancelled till date by any competent authority. The said certificate is very much in favour of the Petitioner and added further, the certificate issued to his brother R.Sivakumar dated 23.07.1996 was declared to be a genuine by the State Level Scrutiny Committee as per proceedings dated 06.03.2015, the impugned order dated 03.07.2015 passed by the Respondent negating the Petitioner's claim for issuance of Community Certificate in his favour and his children is an ex facie, illegal and arbitrary one.

8.At this juncture, it is pertinent for this Court to make a significant mention that in G.O.(Ms).No.235 Revenue [RA3(2)] Department dated 26.06.2015, the Government of Tamilnadu, based on the orders passed by the Madurai Division Bench of this Court in W.P.(MD) No. 1355 of 2015 dated 05.02.2015 between D. Thirupathi V. The District Collector, Tirunelveli District, Tirunelveli and another, had constituted an Appellate Authority for an 'Appeal' remedy in regard to the issuance of Community Certificate, which runs as under:

Sl. No.	Community	Issuing Authority	Appellate Authority	Redressal of Grievances
1	Backward Classes / Most Backward Classes /Denotified Communities	Zonal Deputy Tahsildar	Tahsildar	District Collector
2	Scheduled Castes	Tahsildar	Revenue Divisional Officer	District Collector

Sl. No.	Community	Issuing Authority	Appellate Authority	Redressal of Grievances
3	Scheduled Tribes	Revenue Divisional Officer	District Collector	District Collector & Chairman District Level Vigilance Committee

9.It also comes to light that the Government of Tamilnadu had passed G.O.(Ms).No.147, Revenue [RA-3(2)] Department, dated 17.03.2016 (As regards redressal of grievances of Scheduled Tribes), whereby and whereunder, after careful consideration and examining the subject matter in issue had issued an amendment to G.O.(Ms).No.235 Revenue [RA3(2)] Department dated 26.06.2015 to the Paragraph No.4 in the Tabular Column, for Serial No.3 and the entries relating thereto, by substituting the same as under:

Sl .	Community	Issuing Authority	Appellate Authority	Redressal of Grievances
"3	Scheduled Tribes	Revenue Divisional Officer.	District Collector	State Level Scrutiny Committee"

10.It is to be noted that the object of Article 226 of the Constitution of India is to provide a quick and an inexpensive remedy to the aggrieved parties. Therefore, it would be incorrect to incorporate all the proceedings of a suit into a proceeding under Article 226 of the Constitution of India as per decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Babubhai V. Nandal reported in AIR 1974 SC 2105.

11.It is to be borne in mind that as 'Writ Proceeding' is summary in nature, 'Disputed questions' of fact cannot be decided in Writ Jurisdiction as per decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Sumedha Nagpal V. State of Delhi, (2000) 9 SCC 745. Undoubtedly, the power conferred upon the Hon'ble Supreme Court and the High Court under Articles 32 and 226 of the Constitution of India is 'plenary power' and such power is not at all an incomplete power, nor fettered by any legal restraint. Although the power of 'Judicial Review' is at the hands of High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution, notwithstanding the fact that the Constitution of India does not impose any limitation upon the aforesaid power, the Courts themselves have evolved certain self imposed limitations or restraints in regard to the exercise of this extraordinary and unlimited discretionary power, as a matter of prudence and policy. In short, in Law, the whole

field of Article 226 of the Constitution is purely a discretionary one.

12. Coming to the aspect of an 'Executive Power' of the State, it is to be pointed out that the same is coextensive with that of the State Legislature. The power of the State Government to issue executive instructions is confined to filling up of the gaps or covering the area which otherwise is not covered by the existing Rules, as per decision Union of India V. Central Electrical & Mechanical Engineering Service (CE & MES) Group A (Direct Recruits) Association reported in CPWD 2008 1 SCC at Page 354. It cannot be forgotten that the executive instructions which are given by the State exercising its power under Article 162 of the Constitution of India cannot circumvent a statutory provision. In fact, Article 162 of the Constitution does not enjoin the State Government to pass executive Orders which are contrary to Law, which was already made on the subject, by the State, in as much as it would amount to rewriting Art. 162 of the Constitution of India.

13. That apart, in order that the Executive instructions have the force of statutory Rules, it is to be exhibited that they were issued either under the authority showered under the State Government by some statute or under some provision of the Constitution, as per decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court in G.J. Fernandez V. State of Mysore reported in AIR 1967 SC Page 1753.

14. In short, Article 162 of the Constitution requires that where the State has power to make Laws, it can issue executive instruction as per decision Kamala Godera V. State of Rajasthan reported in AIR 2000 Rajasthan 130. Although the State Legislature has the power to make a Law relating to a subject, the executive action by the appropriate Government is not rendered invalid just because there is no Legislation to support such action, as per decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Naraindas V. State of Madhya Pradesh reported in AIR 1974 SC Page 1232.

15. At this juncture, this Court aptly recalls and recollects the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Madhukar Sadbha Shivarkar V. State of Maharashtra and Others (2015) 6 Supreme Court Cases 557 at Special Page Nos. 559 and 560 wherein it is held as follows:

"In the backdrop of the Judgment passed in the criminal cases which have attained finality before the Supreme Court, the State Government, after examining the representations given by the landowners in these cases with reference to the relevant land records of the landholders of the villages, has rightly exercised its statutory

power by appointing the Sub-Divisional Officer as an enquiry officer at the first instance and later on Deputy Commissioner of Pune was appointed to enquire into the matter which is in the large public interest. (Para 26)

The order is passed by the State Government only to enquire into the landholding records with a view to find out as to whether original land revenue records have been destroyed and fabricated to substantiate their unjustifiable claim by paying fraud upon the Tahsildar and appellate authorities to obtain the orders unlawfully in their favour by showing that there is no surplus land with the Company and its shareholders as the valid sub-leases are made and they are accepted by them in the proceedings under Section 21 of the Act, on the basis of the alleged false declarations filed by the shareholders and sub-lessees under Section 6 of the Act. The allegation of fraud in relation to getting the landholdings of the villages by the declarants on the alleged ground of destroying original revenue records and fabricating revenue records to show that there are 384 sub-leases of the land involved in the proceedings to retain the surplus land illegally as alleged, to the extent of more than 3000 acres of land and the orders are obtained unlawfully by the declarants in the land ceiling limits will be nullity in the eye of the law through such orders have attained finality, if it is found in the enquiry by the enquiry officer that they are tainted with fraud, the same can be interfered with by the State Government and its officers to pass appropriate orders. Fraud unravels everything and therefore, the question of limitation under the provisions to exercise power by the State Government does not arise at all. The land owners are also aggrieved parties to agitate their rights to get the orders which are obtained by the declarants as they are vitiated in law on account of nullity is the tenable submission and the same is well founded and acceptable to justify the impugned judgment and order of the High Court.

(Para 27)

The legal submissions made on behalf of the appellants that the State Government has no power either under Section 45(2) or under Section 14(4) of the 1961 to appoint an enquiry officer to enquire into the landholdings of the villages referred to therein are untenable contentions of the appellants which have been rightly rebutted by urging an alternative legal plea that the power exercised by the State Government to pass the orders impugned in the writ petitions is traceable to its executive power under Article 162 of the Constitution of India. This is the most tenable submission, having regard to the magnitude of the alleged fraud in relation to the vast extent of the landholding obtained by the declarants by giving false declarations with a view to come out from the clutches of the land ceiling provisions of the Act, which is the prima facie view taken by the State Government and the same cannot be found fault with by the Supreme Court in these proceedings at this stage. (Paras 28 and 32)

Also, in the aforesaid decision, at Paragraph No.32 at Page No.572, among other things, it is observed as follows:

".....In our considered view, the orders impugned in the writ petitions which are affirmed by the High Court, are perfectly legal and valid and therefore, the same do not warrant interference by this Court in exercise of power of this Court under Article 136 of the Constitution, but on the other hand, the aforesaid orders of the State Government can also be traceable to executive power of the State Government under Article 162 of the Constitution of India having regard to the magnitude of the alleged fraud in relation to the vast extent of the landholding obtained by the declarants by giving false declarations with a view to come out from the clutches of the land ceiling provisions of the Act, which is the prima facie view taken by the State Government and the same cannot be found fault with by this Court in these proceedings at this stage...."

16. When a Government Order or a Statute provides for an adequate, effective, viable and efficacious alternative remedy

and if such an alternative remedy is not cumbersome, then, in that event, it is open to the Petitioner to avail such remedy / machinery constituted under the said Government Order or under the Act, so that, the purport and intent of the Government in providing a certain forum is not whittled down in any manner.

17. Indeed, the remedy of preferring an Appeal enjoined in the amendment G.O.(Ms).No.147 Revenue [RA-3(2)] Department dated 17.03.2016 was brought by the Government of Tamil Nadu based on the observations of the Hon'ble Division Bench of this Court in W.P.(MD) No.1355 of 2015 dated 05.02.2015 to the effect that for all the caste certificate cases which naturally require a factual adjudication, at least one appeal remedy for 'Scheduled Caste', 'Scheduled Tribes' and 'Backward Class' should be provided, which may be in the form of scrutiny by the District Level Vigilance Committee etc. Moreover, in W.P.(MD).No.6340 of 2015 [between R.Raja V. The Revenue Divisional Officer, Madurai, Madurai District], the Hon'ble Division Bench of this Court on 30.06.2015 had permitted the Petitioner therein to prefer an Appeal before the District Collector, Madurai, within ten days from the date of receipt of the order [based on the Government Order].

18. Furthermore, the action of the Government of Tamil Nadu in introducing an 'Appeal' remedy before the District Collector as per G.O.(Ms).No.147 Revenue [RA-3(2)] Department dated 17.03.2016 (by way of amendment to G.O.(Ms).No.235 Revenue [RA3 (2)] Department dated 26.06.2015) does not suffer from any vice or material irregularities and patent illegalities in the eye of Law. Moreover, two Orders of the State Government are in the 'Interest of Public at Large', in the considered opinion of this Court.

19. It is to be relevantly pointed out that a Court of Law has an inherent power to fix a reasonable specified time for performing an act [in the absence of any procedural or codified statute] with a view to secure the ends of Justice or to prevent an abuse of process of Court. However, while determining the time limit, a Court of Law is to act with utmost care and circumspection and is to resort to a prudent course of action, by exercising its thinking judicial discretion and in short, is not to act an arbitrary, capricious, cavalier and whimsical manner.

20. Be that as it may, in view of the fact that the present Writ Petition viz., W.P.No.15330 of 2017 is filed by the Petitioner assailing the Impugned Order of the Respondent/Revenue Divisional Officer, Harur, Dharmapuri District, dated 03.07.2015 rejecting his request for issuance of Community Certificate to him and also this Court taking note of the tenor and spirit of the G.O.(Ms).No.235 Revenue [RA3(2)] Department dated 26.06.2015 and also looking into the contents

of G.O.(Ms).No.147 Revenue [RA-3(2)] Department dated 17.03.2016, is of the considered view that the amended G.O.(Ms).No.147 Revenue [RA-3(2)] Department dated 17.03.2016 issued by the Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu provides for an 'Appeal' remedy to the District Collector (as an Appellate Authority) and thereafter, to the State Level Scrutiny Committee (For Redressal of Grievances) and therefore, in all Fairness, Equity and Fair Play, this Court directs the Petitioner to prefer an Appeal before the District Collector, Dharmapuri as against the impugned order of the Respondent dated 03.07.2015 within a period of two weeks from the date of receipt of copy of this Order. Liberty is granted to the Petitioner to raise all factual and legal pleas by enclosing necessary documents to support his case before the Appellate Authority / District Collector, Dharmapuri. In such event of the Petitioner preferring an Appeal, (of course, well within the time adumbrated by this Court), it cannot be gainsaid that the Appellate Authority, viz., the District Collector, Dharmapuri is to provide an adequate opportunity of hearing to the Petitioner by adhering to the 'Principles of Natural Justice' in true letter and spirit.

21. That apart, in case, the Petitioner seeks time for filing of additional documents or to lead oral/documentary evidence, then, in that event, the Appellate Authority, viz., the District Collector, Dharmapuri shall provide enough opportunity to the Petitioner by keeping in mind the 'Principles of Natural Justice'. The District Collector, Dharmapuri/Appellate Authority, is directed to pass necessary orders on the 'Appeal', as expeditiously as possible, in an Unbiased, Free, Just, Fair, impartial and dispassionate manner, of course, in the manner known to Law and in accordance with Law, in any event, not later than six weeks thereafter. Soon after disposing of the Appeal within the time specified by this Court, the District Collector, Dharmapuri (Appellate Authority) is also directed to send a compliance report to the Registrar (Judicial) of this Court in regard to the orders so passed.

22. Before parting with this case, this Court makes a relevant mention that it is high time for the Government of Tamil Nadu to give an anxious consideration in respect of enacting a complete and comprehensive Law in regard to issuance and verification of Community Certificates of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes quite in tune with the guidelines / direction issued in the Hon'ble Supreme Court decision Kumari Madhuri Patil & Another V. Additional Commissioner Tribal Development, Thane & Others reported in AIR 1995 SC 94 and the modifications made in the later Judgments of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on the subject, which governs the field. To put it succinctly, the neighbouring states like Kerala, Andhrapradesh and Maharashtra had already enacted

necessary legislations for issuance and verifications of the Community Certificates of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and other Backward Classes and the same are in live force. This Court fervently opines that if the Government of Tamil Nadu enacts a codified Law pertaining to the procedure for issuance and verification of Community Certificate of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Classes in the State, then, there is ample scope for wiping out/erasing out 'Bogus/Fictitious Community Certificates' obtained by the concerned persons, to secure the benefits in an unlawful manner.

23. With the aforesaid observations the present Writ Petition stands disposed of. No costs. Consequently, connected Miscellaneous Petition is closed.

Sd/-
Assistant Registrar(CS VI)

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

Sgl
To

1. The Revenue Divisional Officer,
Harur, Dharmapuri District.

2. The District Collector,
Dharmapuri District.

3. The Chief Secretary
Government of Tamil Nadu
Fort St. George, Secretariat,
Chennai - 600 009.

4. The Registrar (Judicial),
High Court, Madras.
(For information and
necessary follow up action)

copy to
The Section Officer
Writ Section
High Court Madras

+1 cc to the Government Pleader sr 52779

W.P.No.15330 of 2017

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