

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS
DATED : 01.02.2018

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THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE C.T.SELVAM
and
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE N.SATHISH KUMAR

H.C.P.No.2044/2017

Poomalai

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Petitioner

vs.

1.The District Collector & District Magistrate
Coimbatore District, Coimbatore.

2.The State of Tamil Nadu
rep.by its Secretary to Government,
Home, Prohibition & Excise Department
Fort St George, Chennai 600 009.

.. Respondents

Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus, calling for the records and quash the same leading to the detention of the petitioner's husband Siva @ Sivachandran, son of Balasubramani aged 24 years, detained under Act 14/82 vide detention order dated 12.10.2017 on the file of the 1st respondent herein made in Memo Cr.MP.No.16/G/2017/E1 the same and consequently, direct the respondents herein to produce the body of the said detenu before this Court and thereafter, set him at liberty from Central Prison, Coimbatore.

For petitioner : Mr.S.Sugendran

For RR1 & 2 : Mr.V.M.R.Rajentren, APP

सत्यमेव जयते
ORDER

(Order of the Court was made by C.T.SELVAM, J.)

Petitioner, wife of the detenu herein, viz., Siva @ Sivachandran, son of Balasubramani, aged 24 years, has filed this Petition challenging the order of detention passed by the 1st respondent in Memo No.658/BCDFGISSSV/2017, dated 26.10.2017, branding him as a "Goonda" as contemplated u/s.2[f] 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 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 08.11.2017. According to the learned counsel for the petitioner, the representation, dated 08.11.2017 has been received by the Government on 15.11.2017 ; the remarks were called on the next day, i.e., on 16.11.2017. But the said remarks were received only on 24.11.2017, after a delay of 8 days. He adds that the file was submitted to the Under Secretary on 27.11.2017, with a delay of 3 days, the Minister has dealt with the said file of the detenu only on 14.12.2017, with a further delay of 17 days and the rejection letter was prepared on 18.12.2017 and sent to the detenu on 19.12.2017. It is his further submission that as per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there were 8 intervening holidays and even after giving concession as to the intervening holidays, still there is a delay of 20 days in considering the representation, 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 15.11.2017 and that was forwarded to the Detaining Authority, calling for remarks on the next day itself and remarks were received by the Government on 24.11.2017 and ultimately, the representation was considered and rejected on 18.12.2017 and the result of the consideration was communicated to the detenu on 19.12.2017 itself. 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 08.11.2017 which was received by the Government on 15.11.2017, remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on the next day itself, i.e., on 16.11.2017. But, remarks have been received by the Government only on 24.11.2017 and the case of the detenu was dealt with by the Minister only on 14.12.2017, i.e., after a total delay of 28 days and thereafter, the representation has been considered by the authorities concerned

and rejected on 18.12.2017 and the Rejection letter was sent to the detenu on 19.12.2017. From the above, it is clear that in between 16.11.2017 and 24.11.2017 [period between remarks called for and remarks received], there is a delay of 8 days ; in between 24.11.2017 and 27.11.2017 [period between remarks received and file submitted to Under Secretary], there is a delay of 3 days and in between 27.11.2017 and 14.12.2017 [i.e., the period between the file dealt with by the Under Secretary and by the Minister], there is a further delay of 17 days. Even if we give concession to the 8 intervening holidays, namely 18.11.2017 ; 19.11.2017 ; 25.11.2017 ; 26.11.2017 ; 02.12.2017 ; 03.12.2017 ; 09.12.2017 and 10.12.2017, still there is a delay of 20 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 20 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 20 days delay has not been properly explained at all.

9.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 the inordinate delay of 20 days in total, has not been properly explained at all.

10.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.

11. 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.

12. Accordingly, the habeas corpus petition is allowed and the detention order passed by the 1st 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(CCC)

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

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To

1. The District Collector & District Magistrate
Coimbatore District, Coimbatore.

2. The Secretary to Government,
State of Tamil Nadu
Home, Prohibition & Excise Department
Fort St George, Chennai 600 009.

3. The Public Prosecutor, High Court, Madras.

4. The Superintendent,
Central Prison, Coimbatore.

5. The Joint Secretary to Govt
Public Law and Order
Fort st. George Chennai-9

H.C.P.No.2044/2017

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