

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 15.02.2018

CORAM

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

H.C.P.No.2395/2017

Valli

..

Petitioner

vs.

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

2.The District Magistrate & District Collector
Salem District.

3.The Superintendent
Central Prison, Salem-7.

.. Respondents

Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus, calling for the entire records leading to the detention of petitioner's son Murugan, about 35 years, son of Palanisamy, presently detained in Central Prison, Salem, under Act 14/1982, as a "Goonda" vide the detention order dated 04.07.2017 in CMP.No.42/Sexual Offender/C2/2017 on the file of the 2nd respondent herein, directing to produce the person or body of the detenu before this Court and thereafter set him at liberty from the Central Prison, Salem by setting aside the above order.

For petitioner : Mr.B.Vasudevan

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

ORDER

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

Petitioner, mother of detenu herein, has filed this Petition challenging the order of detention passed by the 2nd respondent in Cr.MP.No.42/Sexual Offender/C2/2017, dated 04.07.2017, branding her son 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 NIL. According to the learned counsel for the petitioner, the representation, dated NIL has been received by the Government on 01.12.2017 ; the remarks were called on the same day. But the said remarks were received only on 22.01.2018, after a delay of 52 days. He adds that though the file was submitted to the Under Secretary on the same day, i.e., on 22.01.2018, the Minister has dealt with the said file of the detenu only on 30.01.2018, with a further delay of 8 days and the rejection letter was prepared and sent to the detenu on 31.01.2018. It is his further submission that as per the Proforma submitted by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor, there were 20 intervening holidays and even after giving concession as to the intervening holidays, still there is a delay of 40 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 01.12.2017 and that was forwarded to the Detaining Authority, calling for remarks on the same day itself and remarks were received by the Government on 22.01.2018 and ultimately, the representation was considered and rejected on 31.01.2018 and the result of the consideration was communicated to the detenu on 31.01.2018 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 NIL which was received by the Government on 01.12.2017, remarks have been called for from the detaining authority on the same day itself, i.e., on 01.12.2017. But, remarks have been received by the Government only on 22.01.2018 and the case of the detenu was dealt with by the Minister only on 30.01.2018, i.e., after a total delay of 60 days and thereafter, the representation has been considered by the authorities concerned

and rejected on 31.01.2018 and the Rejection letter was sent to the detenu on 31.01.2018. From the above, it is clear that in between 01.12.2017 and 22.01.2018 [period between remarks called for and remarks received], there is a delay of 52 days and in between 22.01.2018 and 30.01.2018 [i.e., the period between the file submitted to the Department concerned and dealing of the same by the Minister], there is a further delay of 8 days. Even if we give concession to the 19 intervening holidays, namely 02.12.2017 ; 03.12.2017 ; 09.12.2017 ; 10.12.2017 ; 16.12.2017 ; 17.12.2017 ; 23.12.2017 ; 24.12.2017 ; 25.12.2017 ; 30.12.2017 ; 31.12.2017 ; 01.01.2018 ; 06.01.2018 ; 07.01.2018 ; 13.01.2018 ; 14.01.2018 ; 15.01.2018 ; 16.01.2018 ; 20.01.2018 and 21.01.2018, still there is a delay of 40 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 40 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 40 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 40 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 2nd 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 (CS IX)

//True copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

AP

To

- 1.The Secretary to the Government,
State of Tamil Nadu,
Home, Prohibition & Excise Department,
Fort St George, Chennai-9.
- 2.The District Magistrate & District Collector
Salem District.
- 3.The Superintendent
Central Prison, Salem-7.
- 4.The Joint Secretary to Government,
Public (Law and order) fort. ST. George,
Chennai-9
- 5.The Public Prosecutor,
High Court, Madras.

H.C.P.No.2395/2017

BR(CO)
GN(09/03/2018)