

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 28.02.2020

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE R.SUBBIAH
and
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE R.PONGIAPPAN

H.C.P.No.2582 of 2019

M.Sankar S/o.Mayavan

...Petitioner

Vs

1.The Secretary to Government,
Prohibition and Excise Department,
Secretariat,
Chennai - 600009.

2.The District Collector and District Magistrate,
Cuddalore District,
Cuddalore.

...Respondents

Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying to issue a Writ of Habeas Corpus calling for the records in connection with the order of detention passed by second respondent dated 15.10.2019 in C3/D.O/83/2019 against the petitioner's wife viz., Vanitha W/o.Sankar, aged about 48 years, who is confined at Special Prison for Women, Vellore and set aside the same and direct the respondents to produce the detainee before this Court and set her at liberty.

For Petitioner : Mr.V.Paarthiban

For Respondents : Mr.R.Prathap Kumar
Additional Public Prosecutor

O R D E R

[Order of this Court was made by R.SUBBIAH, J]

Petitioner is the husband of the detainee viz. Vanitha W/o.Sankar, aged 48, who has been branded as a 'Bootlegger' under the Tamil Nadu Act 14 of 1982 and detained under order of second respondent passed in C3/D.O/83/2019 dated 15.10.2019.

2. The detenue came to adverse notice in the following cases:

Sl.N o.	Police Station and Crime No.	Section of Law
1.	Cuddalore O.T. P.S. Cr.No.747/2016	4(1)(aaa) & 4(1-A) of Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act, 1937
2.	Cuddalore O.T. P.S. Cr.No.544/2018	4(1)(aaa) & 4(1-A) of Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act, 1937
3.	Cuddalore O.T. P.S. Cr.No.44/2019	4(1)(aaa) & 4(1-A) of Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act, 1937
4.	Cuddalore O.T. P.S. Cr.No.212/2019	4(1)(aaa) & 4(1-A) of Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act, 1937
5.	Cuddalore O.T. P.S. Cr.No.247/2019	4(1)(aaa) & 4(1-A) of Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act, 1937
6.	Cuddalore O.T. P.S. Cr.No.355/2019	4(1)(aaa) & 4(1-A) of Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act, 1937

The alleged ground case has been registered against the detenue in Crime No.434 of 2019 on the file of Cuddalore O.T. Police Station, for offences u/s.4(1)(aaa) & 4(1-A) of Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act, 1937. Aggrieved by the order of detention, the present writ petition has been filed.

3. Heard learned counsel for petitioner and learned Additional Public Prosecutor appearing for respondents. Perused the materials on record.

4. Though several grounds have been raised in the Habeas Corpus Petition, learned counsel for petitioner would mainly focus his argument on the ground that there is gross violation of procedural safeguards, which would vitiate the detention. The learned counsel, by placing authorities, submitted that the representation made by the petitioner was not considered on time and there was an inordinate and unexplained delay. In support of his contention, learned counsel for petitioner relied on the judgment of the Hon'ble Apex Court in Rajammal vs. State of Tamil Nadu, [(1999) 1 SCC 417].

5. Learned Additional Public Prosecutor would submit that though there was delay in considering the representation, on

that score alone, the impugned detention order cannot be quashed. According to learned Additional Public Prosecutor, no prejudice has been caused to the detainee and thus, there is no violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution of India.

6. The Detention Order in question was passed on 15.10.2019. The petitioner submitted the representation dated 30.10.2019 and the same was received on 18.11.2019. Thereafter, remarks were called for by the Government from the Detaining Authority on 18.11.2019. The remarks were duly received on 13.12.2019. Thereafter, the Government considered the matter and passed the order rejecting the petitioner's representation on 07.01.2020.

7. It is the contention of the petitioner that there was an inordinate delay of 24 days, of which 6 were Government holidays, in submitting the remarks by the Detaining Authority. Thereafter, there was yet another delay of 24 days, of which 10 were Government holidays and hence, there was 32 days delay in considering the representation.

8. 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 detainee 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.'

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. Here, 32 days delay 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 detainee, 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 detainee.

Accordingly, the Habeas Corpus Petition is allowed and the detention order passed by the second respondent against the detainee viz., Vanitha W/o.Sankar, aged 48, in C3/D.O/83/2019 dated 15.10.2019, is set aside. The above named detainee is ordered to be set at liberty forthwith, unless her custody is required in connection with any other case.

Sd/-
Assistant Registrar

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

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To

- 1.The Secretary to Government,
Prohibition and Excise Department,
Secretariat, Chennai - 600009.
- 2.The District Collector and District Magistrate,
Cuddalore District,
Cuddalore.
- 3.The Superintendent,
Special Prison for Women,
Vellore.
- 4.The Public Prosecutor,
High Court, Madras.
- 5.The Joint Secretary to Government
Public (Law and Order) Department
Fort St. George,
Chennai - 600 009.

H.C.P.No.2582 of 2019

RGN(CO)
RN(25/06/2020)