



BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED : 30.07.2020

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE K.KALYANASUNDARAM

and

THE HONOURABLE MRS.JUSTICE T.KRISHNAVALLI

H.C.P.(MD) No.12 of 2020

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M.Chandra

... Petitioner

-vs-

1.State of Tamil Nadu

Rep.by the Secretary to Government

Home, Prohibition and Excise Department

Secretariat

Chennai-600 009

2.The District Collector and District Magistrate

Kanniyakumari District

Nagercoil

3.The Superintendent of Prison

Central Prison

Palayamkottai

Tirunelveli

... Respondents

PRAYER : Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying for the issue of a Writ of Habeas Corpus calling for the entire records connected with the detention order passed in P.D.No.49/2019, dated 11.12.2019, on the file of the second respondent herein and quash the same and direct the respondents to produce the detenu or body of the detenu i.e., the petitioner's brother namely Ravikumar @ Panai Ravi, aged about 48 years, son of Mani, now detained at Central Prison, Palayamkottai, before this Court and set him at liberty forthwith.

For Petitioner : Mr.N.Pragalathan

For Respondents : Mr.V.Neelakandan

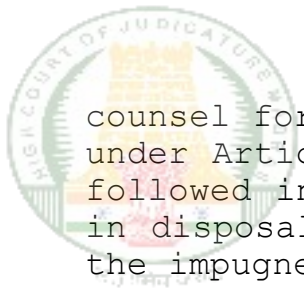
Additional Public Prosecutor

O R D E R

(Order of the Court was made by K.KALYANASUNDARAM, J.)

This habeas corpus petition has been filed by the sister of the detenu, namely, Ravikumar @ Panai Ravi, son of Mani, aged about 48 years, challenging the detention order in P.D.No.49/2019, dated 11.12.2019, passed by the second respondent, branding him as "Drug Offender" as contemplated under Section 2(e) of Tamil Nadu Act 14 of 1982.

2. Mr.N.Pragalathan, learned counsel for the petitioner, would argue that even though the petitioner has raised several grounds, he has confined his arguments only to the delay in disposal of the petitioner's representation. It is submitted by the learned



counsel for the petitioner that the procedural safeguards guaranteed under Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution of India have not been followed in this case and there is unexplained and inordinate delay in disposal of the petitioner's representation, which would vitiate the impugned order of detention.

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3. Mr.V.Neelakandan, learned Additional Public Prosecutor, would submit that after satisfying with the materials placed by the Sponsoring Authority, the Detaining Authority has passed the detention order and there is no illegality or infirmity in the detention order. It is also stated that even if there is any delay in disposal of the representation, it has not caused any prejudice to the rights of the detenu and hence, prayed for dismissal of the habeas corpus petition.

4. Heard both sides and perused the materials available on record.

5. In the instant case, the proforma furnished by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor would indicate that as against the impugned detention order, the petitioner made a representation on 28.12.2019 and the same was received by the Collectorate from the Central Prison on 04.01.2020. The Parawar remarks were called for from the Sponsoring Authority on 06.01.2020. The remarks were received on 31.01.2020 and the report was sent to the Government on the same day i.e.31.01.2020. In between 06.01.2020 and 31.01.2020, there is a delay of sixteen five days, after excluding the Government Holidays of nine days, in receiving remarks from the Sponsoring Authority.

6. At this juncture, it is useful to refer the decision of the Honourable Apex Court in the case of **Rajammal vs. State of Tamil Nadu and another**, reported in **1999 (1) SCC 417**, wherein it is held as follows:

"7. 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 consideration 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. But that does not mean that the authority is preempted from explaining the delay which would have occasioned in the disposal of the representation. The Court can certainly consider whether the delay was occasioned due to permissible reasons or unavoidable caused. This position has been well delineated by a Constitution Bench of this Court in *M.M.Abdulla Kunhi v. Union of India*, 1991 (1) SCC (Cri) 613. The following observations of the Bench can



profitably be extracted here: (SCC 484, Para 12)

"It is a Constitutional mandate commanding the authority concerned to whom the detenu submits his representation to consider the representation and dispose of the same as expeditiously as possible. The words 'as soon as may be' occurring in Clause (5) of Article 22 reflects the concern of the Framers that the representation should be expeditiously considered and dispose of with a sense of urgency without any avoidable delay. However, there can be no hard and fast rule in this regard. It depends upon the facts and circumstances of each case. There is no period prescribed either under the Constitution or under the Detention Law concerned within which the representation should be dealt with. The requirement, however, is that there should not be supine indifference, slackness or callous attitude in considering the representation. Any unexplained delay in the disposal of representation would be a breach of the Constitutional imperative and it would render the continued detention impermissible and illegal."

8. The position, therefore, now is that if delay was caused on account of nay indifference or lapse in considering the representation, such delay will adversely affect further detention of the prisoner. In other words, it is for the authority concerned to explain the delay, if any, in disposing of the representation. It is not enough to say that the delay was very short. Even longer delay can as well be explained. So the test is not the duration or range of delay, but how it is explained by the authority concerned."

7. In the case on hand, as stated supra, the delay of sixteen days in considering the representation of the detenu has not been properly explained by the respondents. Hence, in our considered view, the detention order is liable to be set aside solely on the ground of delay by following the decision of the Honourable Apex Court referred supra.

8. In fine, the Habeas Corpus Petition is allowed. The detention order in P.D.No.49/2019, dated 11.12.2019, passed by the second respondent, is set aside. Consequently, the detenu, namely, Ravikumar @ Panai Ravi, son of Mani, aged about 48 years,, who is now detained at Central Prison, Palayamkottai, is directed to be



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released forthwith unless his presence or custody or detention is required in connection with any other case.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar (AD-II)

// True Copy //

/ /2020

Sub Assistant Registrar(CS)

Note :

In view of the present lock down owing to COVID-19 pandemic, a web copy of the order may be utilized for official purposes, but, ensuring that the copy of the order that is presented is the correct copy, shall be the responsibility of the advocate / litigant concerned.

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To:

- 1.The Secretary to Government,
Home, Prohibition and Excise Department,
State of Tamil Nadu,
Secretariat, Chennai-600 009.
- 2.The District Collector and District Magistrate,
Kanniyakumari District,
Nagercoil.
- 3.The Superintendent of Prison,
Central Prison,
Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli.
- 4.The Joint Secretary to Government,
Public (Law and Order)
Fort.St.George, Chennai-9
- 5.The Additional Public Prosecutor,
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court,
Madurai.

H.C.P. (MD) No.12 of 2020
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