



BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED : 13.08.2020

CORAM:

**THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE K.KALYANASUNDARAM
and
THE HONOURABLE MRS.JUSTICE T.KRISHNAVALLI**

H.C.P. (MD) No.183 of 2020

Pandiselvi

... Petitioner

-VS-

1.The State of Tamil Nadu
represented by Principal Secretary to Government
Home, Prohibition and Exercise (XVI) Department
Secretariat
Fort St.George
Chennai-600 009

2.The District Magistrate and
The District Collector
Pudukkottai District
Pudukkottai

3.The Superintendent
Central Prison
Trichirappalli

... 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 records entire records connected with the detention order of the second respondent in P.D.O.No.03/2020, dated 05.02.2020 and quash the same as illegal and direct the respondents to produce the body and person of petitioner's husband / detenu by name Thangavel, son of Veeraiah, aged about 54 years, residing at Therkku Theru, Vathanakottai, Kulathur Taluk, Pudukkottai District, was detained as a "Goonda" at Trichirappalli Central Prison, before this Court and set him at liberty.

For Petitioner : Mr.P.Ganapathi Subramanian

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 wife of the detenu, namely, Thangavel, son of Veeraiah, aged about 54 years, challenging the detention order in P.D.O.No.03/2020, dated 05.02.2020, passed by the second respondent, branding him as "Goonda" as contemplated under Section 2(f) of Tamil Nadu Act 14 of 1982.

2. Mr.P.Ganapathi Subramanian, 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.

3. Mr.V.Neelakandan, learned Additional Public Prosecutor, on instructions, submitted 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. In the instant case, it is seen from the proforma furnished by the learned Additional Public Prosecutor that the representation of the petitioner, dated 17.02.2020, was received on 19.02.2020. Remarks were called for on the same day i.e.19.02.2020 and it was received on 19.03.2020. The Deputy Secretary dealt with the matter on 20.03.2020. The concerned Minister dealt with the matter on 24.03.2020 and the representation came to be rejected on 26.03.2020. It is seen that in between 19.02.2020 and 19.03.2020, there is inordinate and unexplained delay of twenty one days, after excluding the Government Holidays of eight days, in considering the petitioner's representation.

5. The Honourable Apex Court in the case of **Rajammal vs. State of Tamil Nadu and another**, reported in **1999 (1) SCC 417**, has 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."

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

7. In fine, the Habeas Corpus Petition is allowed. The order of detention passed by the second respondent, in P.D.O.No.03/2020, dated 05.02.2020, is set aside. Consequently, the detenu, namely, Thangavel, son of Veeraiah, aged about 54 years, who is now detained at Trichirappalli Central Prison, is directed to be released forthwith unless his presence or custody or detention is required in connection with any other case.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar

// True Copy //

/ /2020

Sub Assistant Registrar(CS)

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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.

To:

- 1.The Principal Secretary to Government,
Home, Prohibition and Excise (XV I) Department,
State of Tamil Nadu,
Secretariat, Chennai-9.
- 2.The District Magistrate and District Collector,
O/o.The District Magistrate and District Collector,
Pudukkottai District, Pudukkottai.



3.The Superintendent,
Central Prison,
Tiruchirappalli.

4.The Joint Secretary to Government,
Public (Law & Order), Fort Saint George, Chennai

5.The Additional Public Prosecutor,
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court,
Madurai.

H.C.P. (MD) No.183 of 2020
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KG(CO)
TR(26.08.2020) 5P 6C