

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT PATNA
Civil Writ Jurisdiction Case No.15399 of 2021

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Umashankar @ Umashankar Shahni S/o Mahngu Shahni, R/o Vill. Chhajan Vishunpur, P.S. - Kurhani, Dist. - Muzaffarpur, Pin Code - 844127 Cum National Coordinator, Jankranti Morcha, Office at Dr. D.C. Shahni Marg, Maripur Muzaffarpur, P.S. and Dist. - Muzaffarpur, Pin Code - 842001.

... .. Petitioner/s

Versus

1. The Union of India, through the Chief Election Commissioner of India Nirwahan Bhawan, New Delhi.
2. The State of Bihar, through the Principle Secretary, Panchayati Raj Department, Govt. of Bihar, Patna.
3. The Bihar State Election Commission, through the Chief Electroll Commissioner, Sone Bhawan, Bihar, Patna.

... .. Respondent/s

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Appearance :

For the Petitioner/s	:	Mr.Arun Kumar No. 1, Advocate
For the Respondent/s	:	Mr.P. N. Shahi (AAG-6), Mr. Amit Shrivastava, Adv.

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CORAM: HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

and

HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S. KUMAR

ORAL JUDGMENT

(Per: HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S. KUMAR)

(The proceedings of the Court are being conducted through Video Conferencing and the Advocates joined the proceedings through Video Conferencing from their residence.)

Date : 13-09-2021

Heard learned counsel for the parties.

Petitioner has prayed for the following relief(s):-

- “ i. That in the light of Hon’ble Supreme Court order dated 8th Oct. 2013, passed in Civil Appeal No. 9093/2013 (Ax-1) the respondents be strictly directed install the voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trial System (VVPAT) in each and every (E.V.M.) electronic voting machine positively, which are going to be used in upcoming Panchayati Raj Elections of 2021 in the State of Bihar for fair and favor less election.
- ii. That the respondents be strictly prohibited not to use a single E.V.M. without installation of 'VVPAT' System in all those EVMs

which are going to be used in upcoming Panchayat Election 2021 in the State of Bihar.

iii. That respondents are sitting over the matter since last long, whereas petitioner has filed detailed representations in this regard to all the concern authorities for using the VVPAT system in all EVMs going to be used in upcoming Panchayat Election 2021 in Bihar, hence they be punished for their inaction in accordance with Law.

iv. That the respondents be punished sufficiently, who all are violating the order of Hon'ble Supreme Court knowingly and willingly as they all are well aware with the aforementioned order of Hon'ble Supreme Court passed on 8th of Oct. 2013 in Civil Appeal No. 9093/2013.

v. That the respondents be directed to pay the appropriate cost and compensation to the petitioner for unnecessary mental, physical & economical harassment done by the illegal and unconstitutional acts of the respondents.

vi. That any other relief or reliefs may kindly be granted in favor of the petitioner as it may be deemed fit and proper to the facts and circumstances of this case. ”

The Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***D. N. Jeevaraj Vs.***

Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka & Ors, (2016) 2

SCC 653, paragraphs 34 to 38 observed as under:-

“34. The learned counsel for the parties addressed us on the question of the bona fides of Nagalaxmi Bai in filing a public interest litigation. We leave this question open and do not express any opinion on the correctness or otherwise of the decision of the High Court in this regard.

35. However, we note that generally speaking, procedural technicalities ought to take a back seat in public interest litigation. This Court held in *Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra v. State of U.P.* [*Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra v. State of U.P.*, 1989 Supp (1) SCC 504] to this effect as follows: (SCC p. 515, para 16)

“16. The writ petitions before us are not inter

parties disputes and have been raised by way of public interest litigation and the controversy before the court is as to whether for social safety and for creating a hazardless environment for the people to live in, mining in the area should be permitted or stopped. We may not be taken to have said that for public interest litigations, procedural laws do not apply. At the same time it has to be remembered that every technicality in the procedural law is not available as a defence when a matter of grave public importance is for consideration before the court.”

36. A considerable amount has been said about public interest litigation in *R&M Trust [R&M Trust v. Koramangala Residents Vigilance Group, (2005) 3 SCC 91]* and it is not necessary for us to dwell any further on this except to say that in issues pertaining to good governance, the courts ought to be somewhat more liberal in entertaining public interest litigation. However, in matters that may not be of moment or a litigation essentially directed against one organisation or individual (such as the present litigation which was directed only against Sadananda Gowda and later Jeevaraj was impleaded) ought not to be entertained or should be rarely entertained. Other remedies are also available to public spirited litigants and they should be encouraged to avail of such remedies.

37. In such cases, that might not strictly fall in the category of public interest litigation and for which other remedies are available, insofar as the issuance of a writ of mandamus is concerned, this Court held in *Union of India v. S.B. Vohra [Union of India v. S.B. Vohra, (2004) 2 SCC 150: 2004 SCC (L&S) 363]* that: (SCC p. 160, paras 12-13)

“12. Mandamus literally means a command. The essence of mandamus in England was that it was a royal command issued by the King's Bench (now Queen's Bench) directing performance of a public legal duty.

13. A writ of mandamus is issued in favour of a person who establishes a legal right in himself. A writ of mandamus is issued against a person who has a legal duty to perform but has failed and/or neglected to do so. Such a legal duty emanates from either in discharge of a public duty or by operation of law. The writ of mandamus is of a most extensive remedial nature. The object of mandamus is to prevent

disorder from a failure of justice and is required to be granted in all cases where law has established no specific remedy and whether justice despite demanded has not been granted.”

38. A salutary principle or a well-recognised rule that needs to be kept in mind before issuing a writ of mandamus was stated in *Saraswati Industrial Syndicate Ltd. v. Union of India* [*Saraswati Industrial Syndicate Ltd. v. Union of India*, (1974) 2 SCC 630] in the following words: (SCC pp. 641-42, paras 24-25)

“24. ... The powers of the High Court under Article 226 are not strictly confined to the limits to which proceedings for prerogative writs are subject in English practice. Nevertheless, the well-recognised rule that no writ or order in the nature of a mandamus would issue when there is no failure to perform a mandatory duty applies in this country as well. Even in cases of alleged breaches of mandatory duties, the salutary general rule, which is subject to certain exceptions, applied by us, as it is in England, when a writ of mandamus is asked for, could be stated as we find it set out in *Halsbury's Laws of England* (3rd Edn.), Vol. 11, p. 106:

‘198. *Demand for performance must precede application.*—As a general rule the order will not be granted unless the party complained of has known what it was he was required to do, so that he had the means of considering whether or not he should comply, and it must be shown by evidence that there was a distinct demand of that which the party seeking the mandamus desires to enforce, and that that demand was met by a refusal.’

25. In the cases before us there was no such demand or refusal. Thus, no ground whatsoever is shown here for the issue of any writ, order, or direction under Article 226 of the Constitution.”

After the matter was heard for some time, learned counsel for the petitioner, under instructions, states that

petitioner shall be content if a direction is issued to the authority concerned, **i.e, respondent no. 3, The Bihar State Election Commission, through the Chief Electroll Commissioner, Sone Bhawan Bihar, Patna,** or any of the statutory authority to consider and decide the representation which the petitioner shall be filing within a period of four weeks from today for redressal of the grievance(s).

Learned counsel for the respondents states that if such a representation is filed by the petitioner, the authority concerned shall consider and dispose it of expeditiously and preferably within a period of four months from the date of its filing along with a copy of this order.

Statement accepted and taken on record.

As such, petition stands disposed of in the following terms:-

(a) Petitioner shall approach the authority concerned within a period of four weeks from today by filing a representation for redressal of the grievance(s);

(b) The authority concerned shall consider and dispose it of expeditiously by a reasoned and speaking order preferably within a period of three months from the date of its filing along with a copy of this order;

(c) Needless to add, while considering such representation, principles of natural justice shall be followed and due opportunity of hearing afforded to the parties;

(d) Equally, liberty is reserved to the petitioner to take recourse to such alternative remedies as are otherwise available in accordance with law;

(e) We are hopeful that as and when petitioner takes recourse to such remedies, as are otherwise available in law, before the appropriate forum, the same shall be dealt with, in accordance with law and with reasonable dispatch;

(f) Liberty reserved to the petitioner to approach the Court, if the need so arises subsequently on the same and subsequent cause of action;

(g) Liberty also reserved to the petitioner to make a mention for listing of the petition on priority basis. As and when any such mention is made, Registry shall take steps for listing the petition at the earliest.

(h) We have not expressed any opinion on merits.
All issues are left open;

(i) The proceedings, during the time of current Pandemic- Covid-19 shall be conducted through digital mode, unless the parties otherwise mutually agree to meet in person i.e. physical mode;

The petition stands disposed of in the aforesaid terms.

Interlocutory Application(s), if any, stands disposed of.

(Sanjay Karol, CJ)

(S. Kumar, J)

Rajiv/-

AFR/NAFR	NAFR
CAV DATE	NA
Uploading Date	
Transmission Date	NA