

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT PATNA
Civil Writ Jurisdiction Case No.7436 of 2022

Dhananjay Kumar son of late Bhuneshwar Singh Resident of Ward no. 1
Sahpur, P.O. Nehalpur, P.S. Sadar, District Darbhanga.

... .. Petitioner/s

Versus

1. The State of Bihar through Secretary, Department of Land Reforms and Revenue, Govt. of Bihar, Patna.
2. The Collector Darbhanga.
3. The Sub- Divisional Officer, Sadar Darbhanga.
4. The Deputy Collector Land Reforms, Darbhanga.
5. Anchal Adhikari Bahadurpur, District Darbhanga.
6. The SHO Town Thana Darbhanga through Officer Incharge Mabbi O.P., District Darbhanga.
7. Baleshwer Paswan S/o Puran Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
8. Chaurchand Mandal S/o late Rameshwer Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
9. Satto Mandal S/o Chauchand Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
10. Chandradev Rai S/o Ramanand Rai resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
11. Kamli Devi W/o late Ramanand Rai resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
12. Dinesh Mandal S/o Lakshmi Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
13. Verma Mandal S/o Late Rajo Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
14. Ajay Mandal S/o late Rameshwer Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
15. Jiendra Mandal S/o Ajay Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
16. Shankar Mandal S/o Ajay Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
17. Nand Kishore Yadav S/o late Lakshmi Yadav resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
18. Raj Kumar Yadav S/o Lakshmi Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
19. Raj Kishore Yadav S/o Lakshmi Yadav resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.



20. Jitan Mandal S/o Late Sukdeo Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
21. Lakshman Mandal S/o Sukdeo Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
22. Lakshman Mandal S/o Late Mangal Mandal resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
23. Sukdeo Paswan S/o Late Nuja Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
24. Lakshmi Paswan S/o Chhathu Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
25. Mohan Paswan S/o Mahendra Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
26. Binod Paswan S/o Basudeo Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
27. Satya Narain Paswan S/o Mahendra Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
28. Binod Paswan S/o Mahendra Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
29. Satya Narayan Paswan S/o Late Shivaji Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
30. Baleshwer Paswan S/o Late Puran Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
31. Sanjay Paswan S/o Baleshwer Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
32. Ranjeet Paswan S/o Baleshwer Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.
33. Suresh Paswan S/o Jiyalal Paswan resident of Village Kheraj Sahpur, P.S. Town- Mabbi O.P. Anchal Bahadur Pur, District Darbhanga.

... .. Respondent/s

Appearance :

For the Petitioner/s : Mr.Sudhir Kumar Raj, Advocate
For the Respondent/s : Mr.Sajid Salim Khan (SC 25)

CORAM: HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE
and
HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S. KUMAR
ORAL ORDER

(Per: HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE)

2 24-06-2022 Petitioner has prayed for the following relief(s):-

“For issuance of writ of appropriate
nature order or direction commanding



respondents to remove encroachment in Government Land & Road under plot no. 167 (Old Khesra 132); 168 (Old Khesra) 133 and 169 (old Khesra) 234 situated in Village Kharaj Sahpur, Achal Bahadurpur, Sub-division Darbhanga Sadar, District Darbhanga, which is part of public Road (Darbhanga Muzaffarpur old road). The obstructions and encroachment made on these plots have obstructed free movements of pedestrians and vehicular traffic there.

This road is very useful for the public of the nearby villages and it is used as service lane to NH Darbhanga Muzaffarpur. Due to illegal encroachment the public of the nearby villages accident at N.H is seen rampant as the public of the nearby villages uses N.H. for cycling or taking animals to their fields. School children of Primary School Lalsahpur have to use N.H instead of this road and they often became vulnerable to road accidents.

Petitioner apprehends that even in case of Emergency the Fire services vehicle or the ambulances could reach in western Tola of the village smoothly.

The local public officers as Well as Subdivision offices, the local Police are unmindful of their duty and responsibility to get the public land measured and get those encroachment removed by resorting to Public Land Encroachment Proceedings as well as by taking actions under section 133 Criminal Procedure code 1973. No land encroachment has



been initiated.”

We find that petitioner has an alternative remedy, equally efficacious in term of and under the provisions of the Bihar Public Land Encroachment Act, 1956.

Confronted as to why the petitioner has not taken recourse to such remedies, we see no answer forthcoming.

We see that the present petition is in the nature of private interest litigation and not public interest litigation, inasmuch as dispute between the private parties stands highlighted. As such, we refrain from issuing any notice.

Learned counsel for the State opposes the petition stating that the petition is misconceived; raises disputed question of fact; is not in public interest; and that the issue can be best resolved at the local level by the appropriate authorities.

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.”

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

(a) Liberty reserved to the petitioner to take recourse to such remedies as are otherwise available in accordance with law;

(b) 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;

(c) The authority concerned shall consider and dispose of the matter expeditiously by a reasoned and speaking order preferably within a period of four months from the date of approaching the petitioner before the appropriate authority;

(d) Needless to add, while considering and deciding the matter, principles of natural justice shall be followed and due opportunity of hearing afforded to the parties;

(e) Liberty reserved to the petitioner to approach the appropriate forum/Court, should the need so arise subsequently on the same and subsequent cause of action;

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

(g) 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, shall stand disposed
of.

(Sanjay Karol, CJ)

(S. Kumar, J)

K.C.Jha/-DKS

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