

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT PATNA

Civil Writ Jurisdiction Case No.18479 of 2022

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1. Nandlal Mahto S/o Late Adhik Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S. Bhagwanpur, District Begusarai.
 2. Ramanuj Mahto S/o Bechan Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S. Bhagwanpur, District Begusarai.
 3. Yogendra Mahto S/o Late Shankar Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S. Bhagwanpur, District Begusarai.
 4. Dhiraj Kumar S/o Sri Angad Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S. Bhagwanpur, District Begusarai.
 5. Ram Lalit Rai S/o Ram Pratap Rai Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S. Bhagwanpur, District Begusarai.

... .. Petitioner/s

Versus

1. The State of Bihar through the Principal Secretary, Department of Revenue and Land Reforms, Government of Bihar, Patna.
2. The Director, Department of Revenue and Land Reforms, Government of Bihar, Patna.
3. The Principal Secretary, Rural Development Department, Government of Bihar, Patna.
4. The Director, Rural Development Department, Government of Bihar, Patna.
5. The Commissioner, Munger Division, Munger
6. The Collector, Begusarai.
7. The Sub-Divisional Officer Teghra, District-Begusarai.
8. The Anchal Adhikari Bhagwanpur Anchal, District-Begusarai.
9. The Block Development Officer Bhagwanpur Block, District-Begusarai.
10. Raghunath Mahto S/o Late Basant Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.
11. Ram Nandan Mahto S/o Late Bhuttu Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.
12. Sanjay Kumar S/o Ram Nandan Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.
13. Laddu Mahto S/o Late Ram Roop Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.



14. Bechan Mahto S/o Late Ram Roop Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.
15. Poshi @ Pashupati Mahto S/o Late Rajendra Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.
16. Rameshwar Mahto S/o Late Jagdeo Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.
17. Kamakhya Prasad S/o Late Mahendra Mahto Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.
18. Triloki Rai S/o Late Shyam Bihari Rai Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.
19. Ram Bilash Rai S/o Late Shyam Bihari Rai Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.
20. Bhushan Rai S/o Late Shyam Bihari Rai Resident of Village-Bishanpur, Post-Manopur, P.S.-Bhagwanpur, District-Begusarai.

... .. Respondent/s

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Appearance :

For the Petitioner/s : Mr.Chandra Mauli Chaurasia, Advocate
For the Respondent/s : Mr.Md. Khurshid Alam (AAG-12)

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CORAM: HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

and

HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE PARTHA SARTHY

ORAL JUDGMENT

(Per: HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE)

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(The proceedings of the Court are being conducted by Hon'ble the Chief Justice/ Hon'ble Judges through Video Conferencing from their residential offices/residences. Also, the Advocates and the Staffs joined the proceedings through Video Conferencing from their residences/offices.)

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Date : 20-01-2023



Heard learned counsel for the parties.

Petitioners have prayed for the following relief(s):-

- (i) For issuance of a writ in the nature of 'Mandamus' Commanding the respondents authorities concerned directing them to remove the illegal encroachments done by the Respondents No. 10 to 20 in accordance with law immediately over an area of 1 Bigha 06, Kathas, 9 Dhurs of land of Kheshra No. 1213 of Khata No. 240 situated in Mouza- Mokhtiyarpur Bishanpur, Thana No. 275, Tauzi No. 3615 within Bhagwanpur Anchal, Block and Police Station in the district of Begusarai recorded as Gair Majarua Aam land in the Cadastral Survey Khatian as well as in Revisional Survey Khatian used as public Road by the general public of the locality concerned since time immemorial but the same has



been illegally encroached by the respondents No. 10 to 20 and some other persons of the Village by constructing their respective houses, Bathans, Sahan, cowsheds etc. over the same and some of the respondents being the illegal encroachers are using the said public land for cultivation within their respective possession encroached by them since long till date and hence the general public of the village at large including the students of the Government Upgraded Middle School, Bishanpur are facing great difficulties but the respondents authorities concerned have not taken any step or action to remove the illegal encroachments done over the aforesaid public land in question by the respondents No. 10 to 20 and some



other persons in accordance with law in spite of the several representations filed on behalf of the general public including the petitioners before the Respondents No. 6 to 9 for the same but all in vain till date.

- (ii) For issuance of a writ in the nature of "Mandamus" commanding the Respondents authorities concerned to reconstruct the P.C.C. Road already constructed through the middle of the Government Upgraded Middle School, Bishanpur earlier situated in Bhagwanpur Anchal, Block and Police Station in the district of Begusarai by converting the said P.C.C. Road from the Middle parts of the School towards the extreme southern portion of the school situated over the said public land in question immediately in order to



safeguard the life of the same students of the said School from the accident of regular traffics running on the Road between the two parts of the Buildings of the said school where the children of the school play in Tiffin time for want of the land for the playground for the children in the School due to encroachments made over the public land in question and the same is possible only after the removal of the illegal encroachments over the said public land done by the respondents No. 10 to 20 and some other persons of the village immediately as per law and further to construct the Boundary wall around the said school after removal of the illegal encroachments in accordance with law over the said public land done



by the respondents No. 10 to 20 and some other persons of the Village.

- (iii) For issuance of a writ in the nature of 'Mandamus' commanding the respondents authorities concerned directing them to make available the playgrounds for the small children of the Government Upgraded Middle School over the aforesaid public land in question after removal of the illegal encroachments as per law immediately done by the Respondents No. 10 to 20 and some other persons of the Village Bishanpur over the said public land in question since there is no any playground available for the small children of the Government Upgraded Middle School, Bishanpur till date due to lack of the land over the said public land in question due to the illegal encroachments done by the aforesaid encroachers over the same but the



respondents authorities concerned are not taking any step for removal of the said illegal encroachments of the respondents No. 10 to 20 over the said public land in question in the Northern and Southern side of the whole P.C.C.

Road situated over the said public land in question.

- (iv) And further for grant of any other Relief or Reliefs for which the petitioners are entitled to in the facts and circumstances of the case of the petitioners on record as stated below.

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.

We find that petitioners have 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 petitioners have 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.

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 petitioners to take recourse to such remedies as are otherwise available in accordance with law;

(b) We are hopeful that as and when petitioners take 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 petitioners 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 petitioners 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;

(j) The proceedings 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)

(Partha Sarthy, J)

P.K.P./Amrendra

AFR/NAFR	
CAV DATE	
Uploading Date	24.01.2023
Transmission Date	

