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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

Date of Decision: 02.08.2023

+ CONT.CAS(C) 343/2018 & CM APPL. 19858/2018

SANJAY MEHTA & ANR

..... Petitioner

Through: Mr. V Mehta, Ms. Aditi Nair, Advs.

versus

V S YADAV DIRECTOR (HQ) & ORS

..... Respondent

Through: Mr. Sanjay Kumar Pathak, SC with

Mr. KK Koumodi Kiran, Mr. MS Akhtar, Ms. RV

Tigga, Ms. Nidhi Thakur, Mr. SK Jha, Advs.

Mr. Anupam Srivastava, ASC with Mr. Dhairya

Gupta, Mr. Vasuh Mishra, Advs. for R-3

Ms. Manika Tripathy, SC with Mr. Ashutosh

Kaushik, Adv.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE JASMEET SINGH

J U D G M E N T

JASMEET SINGH, J (ORAL)

1. This is a petition seeking initiation of contempt proceedings for violation of the order 26.03.2010 passed in WP(C) 2449/2007 and also to restore status quo ante as on 03.05.2018.
2. As per the order dated 26.03.2010, the Division Bench was pleased to order as under:-

“42. We are thus of the view that acquisition proceedings are not required to be quashed on account of the plea of the petitioners and as to whether the sanctioned farm houses are liable to be released from acquisition proceeding is an aspect which needs to be examined by the competent authority under Section 48 of the said Act.



43. *We thus permit the petitioners to file a representation to the competent authority under Section 48 of the said Act raising all pleas as are germane within thirty days of pronouncement of this judgment and the said applications, if so filed, would be decided in accordance with law by the competent authority. Till such time as the applications are decided, no coercive steps will be taken against the petitioners and the parties will maintain status quo as to nature, title and possession of the land in question. In case of an adverse decision, this benefit would continue for a period of fifteen days after the date of the receipt of the decision by the petitioners in order to enable the petitioners to take recourse to the legal remedy, if any. We, however, make it clear that if no such application is filed within a period of thirty days of pronouncement of this judgment, the respondents would be free to proceed against the land In question.”*

3. Thereupon the petitioners made a representation on 22.04.2010. On account of promulgation of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, the petitioners filed a fresh writ petition being WP(C) 4530/2014 seeking benefit under Section 24(2) of the said Act.
4. The writ petition was allowed by the Division Bench *vide* order dated 24.11.2014 and the acquisition proceedings were deemed to have lapsed.



5. The respondent challenged the said order in SLP and *vide* order dated 16.02.2018, the SLPs were allowed and the judgment of the High Court was set aside. The Hon'ble Supreme Court was also pleased to dismiss the writ petitions filed by the respondent owners before the High Court. Thereafter the possession was taken by the respondent on 04.05.2018. Thereupon the present contempt petition has been filed.
6. It is stated by Mr. Mehta, learned counsel for the petitioners that in the present case, the order dated 26.03.2010 was categorical and directed the respondents to first decide the objection under Section 48 of the petitioner and till the said time, no coercive steps were to be taken by the respondent. The objections were not decided and the *status quo* with regard to possession was not maintained.
7. He states that the respondents have, till date, not decided the representation and despite that have taken possession on 04.05.2018.
8. Mr. Mehta, learned counsel has also relied upon the judgment of “*Delhi Development Authority vs. Ashok Solomon and Ors.*” in Civil Appeal No. 3565 of 2023 and orders passed in “*Indore Development Authority vs. Manoharlal and Ors. Etc.*” to urge that the taking of proceedings under Right to Fair Compensation is no bar to the rights accrued in favour of the petitioner under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894.
9. *Per contra* the learned counsel for the respondents state that once the petitioners have moved under the Right to Fair Compensation, they have given up their rights under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, and once those writ petitions have been dismissed, the contempt petition will not lie.
10. I have heard learned counsel for the parties.



11. In the present case, the letter dated 10.07.2014 written by the petitioner himself / themselves is most important. Para 5 and 6 of the letter read as under:-

“5. Therefore, in view of the statutory mandate under the New Land Acquisition Act there are no proceedings existing or pending under the Old Acquisition Act. Thus, it is debatable whether any orders in the exercise of authority under Section 48 of the Old Acquisition Act in respect of denotification from acquisition can be passed or not, when the acquisition proceedings have already lapsed with effect from 01.01.2014. Consequently, our representation dated 22/04/2010 for denotification under the Old Acquisition Act would have itself become infructuous.

6. However, without prejudice to our aforesaid contention in respect of lapsing of acquisition proceedings and the lack of jurisdiction with the authorities under the Old Acquisition Act, the undersigned in order to dispel any erroneous apprehension is still providing the information as sought by the letter under reply. Please find enclosed (a) copy of the Building Plan & Sanction Letter in respect of the built up area on the subject land; and (b) Affidavit by myself and co-owner (Mr. Rohit Mehta) stating on oath that no compensation has been received.”



12. The petitioners themselves state that the representation dated 22.04.2010 for de-notification under the Old Acquisition Act has become infructuous and therefore, no order was required to be passed by the respondent on the representation of the petitioners.
13. Once the petitioner himself says that the representation dated 22.04.2010 for de-notification under the Old Acquisition Act has lapsed, the petitioner cannot now be permitted to initiate the contempt proceedings for violation of the order dated 26.03.2010.
14. In addition, I am also of the view that once the petitioners moved the High Court under the Right to Fair Compensation, they have by their conduct, deemed to have waived the earlier order dated 26.03.2010.
15. The order of 26.03.2010 has merged in the order dated 24.11.2014 and 16.02.2018 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, wherein the Hon'ble Supreme Court allowed the SLP and dismissed the writ petition of the respondent owners pending in the High Court.
16. The Hon'ble Supreme Court even in the order dated 16.02.2018 did not reserve the rights of the petitioners contained in the order dated 26.03.2010.
17. In the case of "***Gojer Bros. (P) Ltd. v. Ratan Lal Singh***", (1974) 2 SCC **453**, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has held as under:-

"11. The juristic justification of the doctrine of merger may be sought in the principle that there cannot be, at one and the same time, more than one operative order governing the same subject-matter. Therefore the judgment of an inferior court, if subjected to an examination by the superior court, ceases to



have existence in the eye of law and is treated as being superseded by the judgment of the superior court. In other words, the judgment of the inferior court loses its identity by its merger with the judgment of the superior court.”

- 18.The judgment of “*Delhi Development Authority vs. Ashok Solomon and Ors.*” as well as “*Indore Development Authority vs. Manoharlal and Ors. Etc.*” are distinguishable as in those cases where the acquisition was challenged before the High Court.
- 19.In the present case, on 16.02.2018, the acquisition proceedings have been upheld by the Hon’ble Supreme Court.
- 20.Therefore, it cannot be said that the respondents are guilty of any intentional and *mala fide* violation of the order dated 26.03.2010.
- 21.For the said reasons, the contempt petition is dismissed. However, the petitioners are free to avail any / all legal rights including filing of the writ petition in accordance with law.

JASMEET SINGH, J

AUGUST 2, 2023 / (MS)

Click here to check corrigendum, if any