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H.C.P.No.710 of 2024

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 02.07.2024

CORAM :

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE M.S. RAMESH

AND

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE SUNDER MOHAN

H.C.P.No.710 of 2024

Parvathi Devi

... Petitioner / wife of the detenue

Vs.

1.The Commissioner of Police,
Tambaram City,
Office of the Commissioner of Police,
Sholinganallur,
Chennai – 119

2.The Principal Secretary,
Government of Tamil Nadu,
Home, Prohibition and Excise Department,
Secretariat,
Chennai – 600 009

3.The Superintendent,
Central Prison,
Puzhal, Chennai – 600 066

4.The Inspector of Police,
Prohibition Enforcement Wing,
Guduvanchery

... Respondents

Prayer: Habeas Corpus Petition filed under Article 226 of the



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Constitution of India, praying for the issuance of Writ of Habeas Corpus, calling for the records pertaining to the order of detention passed by the first respondent herein and made in No.25/BCDFGISSSV/2024 dated 28.02.2024, and to set aside the same and directing the third respondent to produce the detenu, the husband of the petitioner herein Thiru.B.Arjundass, aged 37 years, S/o.Badal Chandra Dass, now confined in Central Prison, Puzhal, Chennai before this Court and set him at liberty.

For Petitioner : Mr.Ganesh Rajan
For Respondents : Mr.A.Gokulakrishnan
Additional Public Prosecutor

ORDER

M.S.RAMESH, J.
and
SUNDER MOHAN, J.

The petitioner, who is the wife of the detenu B.Arjundass, S/o.Badal Chandra Dass, aged about 37 years, now confined at Central Prison, Puzhal, Chennai District, has come forward with this petition challenging the detention order passed by the first respondent dated 28.02.2024 slapped on her husband, branding him as "Drug Offender" under the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Dangerous Activities of Bootleggers, Cyber Law Offenders, Drug Offenders, Forest Offenders, Goondas, Immoral Traffic Offenders, Sand Offenders, Sexual Offenders, Slum Grabbers and Video Pirates Act, 1982 [Tamil Nadu Act 14 of 1982].



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2. Heard the learned counsel for the petitioner and the learned Additional Public Prosecutor appearing for the respondents.

3. Though several grounds are raised in the petition, the learned counsel for the petitioner focused mainly on the ground that there is an unexplained delay in considering the representation of the petitioner, dated 25.03.2024. According to the learned counsel for the petitioner, though the representation is dated 25.03.2024, the same has been received by the Government only on 26.03.2024; the file has been dealt with by the Deputy Secretary on 28.03.2024 and the Minister concerned dealt with the file only on 06.04.2024 and the Rejection Letter was prepared on 08.04.2024 and sent to the detenu on 10.04.2024. It is the further submission of the learned counsel that the delay of 5 days in considering the representation remains unexplained and the same vitiates the detention order. In support of his contention, the learned counsel for the petitioner relied on the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Rajammal Vs. State of Tamil Nadu, reported in (1999) 1 SCC 417.***

4. As per the submission of the learned counsel for the petitioner



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and on perusal of the records, we find that the representation of the petitioner is dated 25.03.2024, which was received by the Government on 26.03.2024 and further, the Minister concerned had dealt with the file of the detenu only on 06.04.2024 and the Rejection Letter was sent to the detenu on 10.04.2024. Thus, we find there is a considerable delay of 5 days in considering the representation of the petitioner. This delay of 5 days in considering the petitioner's representation remains unexplained.

5. It is trite law that the representation should be very expeditiously considered and disposed of with a sense of urgency and without avoidable delay. Any unexplained delay in the disposal of the representation would be a breach of the constitutional imperative and it would render the continued detention impermissible and illegal. From the records produced, we find that no acceptable explanation has been offered for the delay of 5 days. Therefore, we have to hold that the delay has vitiated further detention of the detenu.

6. In the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Rajammal's case (cited supra)***, it has been held as follows:



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"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 Constitution 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."

As per the dictum laid down by the Supreme Court in above cited ***Rajammal's case***, number of days of delay is immaterial and what is to be considered is whether the delay caused has been properly explained by the authorities concerned. But, here the inordinate delay of 5 days has not been properly explained at all.

7. Further, in a recent decision in ***Ummu Sabeena vs. State of Kerala-2011 STPL (Web) 999 SC***, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has held that the history of personal liberty, as is well known, is a history of insistence on procedural safeguards. The expression 'as soon as may be', in Article 22(5) of the Constitution of India clearly shows the concern of the makers of the Constitution that the representation, made on behalf of the detenu, should be considered and disposed of with a sense of urgency



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and without any avoidable delay.

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8. In the light of the above discussion, we have no hesitation in quashing the order of detention on the ground of delay on the part of the Government in disposing of the representation of the petitioner.

9. Accordingly, the detention order passed by the first respondent, in BCDFGISSSV No.25/2024, dated 28.02.2024, is hereby set aside and the Habeas Corpus Petition is allowed. The detenu viz., B.Arjundass, S/o.Badal Chandra Dass, aged about 37 years, confined at Central Prison, Puzhal, Chennai District, is directed to be set at liberty forthwith unless he is required in connection with any other case.

[M.S.R., J] [S.M., J]

02.07.2024

Index: Yes/No

Speaking/Non-speaking order

Neutral Citation: Yes/No

Anu

To

1.The Commissioner of Police,



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Tambaram City,
Office of the Commissioner of Police,
Sholinganallur,
Chennai – 119

2.The Principal Secretary,
Government of Tamil Nadu,
Home, Prohibition and Excise Department,
Secretariat,
Chennai – 600 009

3.The Superintendent,
Central Prison,
Puzhal, Chennai – 600 066

4.The Inspector of Police,
Prohibition Enforcement Wing,
Guduvanchery

5.The Joint Secretary,
Law and Order Department,
Secretariat, Chennai.

6.The Public Prosecutor,
High Court, Madras.



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