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W.P.No.19363 of 2022

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

RESERVED ON : 10.06.2024

PRONOUNCED ON : 14.06.2024

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE G.K.ILANTHIRAIYAN

W.P.No.19363 of 2022

M.S.Manikavasagam

... Petitioner

-Vs-

1. The District Collector,
No.62, Rajaji Salai,
M.Singaravelar Maaligai,
4th Floor, Chennai Collectorate,
Chennai – 600 001.

2. M.M.Ramesh

...Respondents

Prayer: Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India for issuance of a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, to call for the records in Sa.Mu.Na.Ka.No.4017/A1/2021 dated 27.04.2022, on the file of the first respondent and quash the same consequently direct the first respondent to make decision under Section 23(2) of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2017.

For Petitioner : Mr.S.L.Venkatesh

For Respondents

For R1 : Mr.Mohammed Sathik
Government Advocate

For R2 : Mr.N.Nagu Sah



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

ORDER

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This writ petition has been filed challenging the order passed by the first respondent dated 27.04.2022, thereby dismissed the appeal filed by the petitioner as against the order passed by the Revenue Divisional Officer dated 19.07.2021, thereby dismissed the complaint lodged by the petitioner under Section 23(2) of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizen Act, 2017 (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”).

2. The petitioner is the father and the second respondent is the son. The petitioner owned property comprised in survey No.335/2 part situated at Door No.9/407, 9th Block, 50th Street, Sidco Nagar, Villivakkam, Chennai – 600 049. It was purchased by the petitioner by the registered sale deed dated 15.09.1989 vide document No.3664/1989. He got married with one Kasibai and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. His wife died on 26.05.2015.

3. While being so, the second respondent is being the first son of the petitioner started to harass the petitioner to settle the property



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

exclusively in his favour. He has also emotionally blackmailed the petitioner and as such, the petitioner was forced to execute the settlement deed in favour of the second respondent by the settlement deed dated 23.06.2004 registered vide document No.3135/2004. On perusal of the settlement deed shows that it was executed under coercion and undue influence exercised by the second respondent for the reason that, as per the recital of the settlement deed, no shares has been allotted to any other children of the petitioner and other legal heirs were forced to sign as the settlement witness to the settlement deed. It was irrevocable settlement deed during his life time.

4. After execution of settlement deed, the second respondent has shown his original face and started to harass the petitioner. Thereafter, the petitioner also had lost the original sale deed as such he lodged compliant before the Inspector of Police, J-6 Thiruvannamiyur Police Station, and obtained non traceable certificate. Based on the said certificate, the petitioner had cancelled the settlement deed executed in favour of the second respondent by the cancellation deed dated 28.01.2015 registered vide document No.350/2015.



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

5. In fact, though the petitioner had executed the settlement deed in favour of the second respondent, the possession of the subject property is always with the petitioner. Therefore, it was not acted upon by the second respondent. Thereafter, the petitioner's wife also died on 26.05.2015. In fact, the second respondent did not perform his last rites, since the petitioner had cancelled the settlement deed unilaterally. In order to substantiate the same, the petitioner had filed suit for declaration declaring the settlement deed executed in favour of the second respondent is null and void and declared the revocation of settlement deed as valid one. However, the said suit was dismissed and the appeal filed by the petitioner was also dismissed.

6. Thereafter, due to the harassment made by the second respondent, the petitioner lodged complaint under Section 23(2) of the Act, before the Revenue Divisional Officer, Chennai. However, the Revenue Divisional Officer dismissed the complaint lodged by the petitioner only on the ground that already civil Court dismissed the suit filed by the petitioner for declaration and the same was also confirmed by the appellate Court. Further the Revenue Divisional Officer did not even



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

enquiry the petitioner and without even conducting enquiry, mechanically dismissed the complaint lodged by the petitioner only on the ground that the petitioner already approached the civil Court and the suit was dismissed. Aggrieved by the same, the petitioner filed appeal before the first respondent and the first respondent also on the very same ground dismissed the appeal and confirmed the order passed by the Revenue Divisional Officer. Hence, the petitioner approached this Court by way of the present writ petition.

7. The second respondent filed counter and the learned counsel appearing for the second respondent submitted that the settlement deed was executed in respect of the suit property which was acquired by the petitioner as vacant site. Thereafter, the second respondent had developed the said property by putting up constructions out of his own fund. The settlement deed was executed only after receiving consideration in full from time to time. That apart, there was no condition as enumerated under Section 23(2) of the Act, imposed in the settlement deed executed in favour of the second respondent. The petitioner had already filed suit for declaration and lost before the trial



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

Court as well as the appellate Court. After having been failed before the Civil court for the very same issue, approached the Revenue Divisional Officer under the Act. It was also rightly dismissed and the same was confirmed by the first respondent

8. Heard the learned counsel appearing on either side and perused the materials placed before this Court.

9. In the interest of justice, this Court directed the petitioner and the second respondent to appear before this Court. Both had appeared before this Court on 10.06.2024. The petitioner deposed that on coercion, he was forced to execute the settlement deed in favour of the second respondent in respect of the subject property. Thereafter, the second respondent harassed the petitioner to the core and cornered and driven out the petitioner from the subject property. Now the petitioner is residing in a rental house and no one is maintaining him including the second respondent. In fact, the second respondent neglected the petitioner immediately after execution of settlement deed and started to harass him. After demise of his wife, literally he is in street without any



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

help of the sons and daughters. He cried before this Court and he doesn't even want to see the face of the second respondent.

10. The second respondent deposed that he is working as Loco Pilot and he is well off. Though, he denied the allegations leveled by the petitioner, the petitioner is being the father, leveled very serious allegations as against the second respondent in the open Court. No parents will level serious allegations on their own children in front of the general public. Only because of the harassment of the second respondent and in failure to maintain the petitioner, he cried before this Court and also leveled serious allegations as against the second respondent. Therefore, the petitioner rightly lodged the complaint under Section 23(2) of the Act. Unfortunately, the Revenue Divisional Officer without even conducting any enquiry, only on the ground that the petitioner already approached the civil Court and failed, dismissed the complaint lodged by the petitioner. It was also mechanically confirmed by the first respondent herein without considering the facts and circumstances.



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

11. That apart, the petitioner was never heard by the Revenue Divisional Officer on the complaint lodged by him. Therefore, it is clear violation of principles of natural justice. It is true that the petitioner already filed suit in O.S.No.3033 of 2016 on the file of the VIII Assistant City Civil Court, Chennai, for declaration declaring that the settlement deed executed in favour of the second respondent is null and void and declare the cancellation of settlement deed as valid one. It was dismissed and the same was also confirmed by the appellate Court in A.S.No.112 of 2018 on the file of the III Additional City Civil Court, Chennai. Whereas the petitioner lodged complaint under Section 23(2) of the Act, before the authority concerned on completely different grounds. It is relevant to extract Section 23(2) of the Act as follows :-

“23. Transfer of property to be void in certain circumstances:-

1. Where any senior citizen who, after the commencement of this Act, has by way of gift or otherwise, his property, subject to the condition that the transferee shall provide the basic amenities and basic physical needs to the transferor and such transferee refuses or fails to provide such amenities and physical needs, the said transfer of property shall be deemed to have been made by fraud or coercion or under undue



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

influence and shall at the option of the transferor be declared void by the Tribunal.

2. Where any senior citizen has a right to receive maintenance out of an estate and such estate or part , thereof is transferred, the right to receive maintenance may be enforced against the transferee if the transferee has notice of the right, or if the transfer is gratuitous; but not against the transferee for consideration and without notice of right.

3. If any senior citizen is incapable of enforcing the rights under sub-sections (1) and (2), action may be taken on his behalf by any of the organisation referred to in Explanation to sub-section (1) of section 5. ”

Therefore, if the settlee failed to provide basic amenities and basic physical needs to the settlor and such settlee refuses or fails to provide such amenities and physical needs, the said settlement of subject property shall be deemed to have been made by fraud or coercion or under undue influence.

12. The learned counsel appearing for the second respondent relied upon the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of ***Sudesh Chhikara Vs. Ramti Devi*** in Order dated **06.12.2022** in



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

Civil Appeal No. 174 of 2021, which reads as follows:-

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“12. Sub-section (1) of Section 23 covers all kinds of transfers as is clear from the use of the expression “by way of gift or otherwise”. For attracting sub-section (1) of Section 23, the following two conditions must be fulfilled:

- a. The transfer must have been made subject to the condition that the transferee shall provide the basic amenities and basic physical needs to the transferor; and*
- b. the transferee refuses or fails to provide such amenities and physical needs to the transferor.*

13. If both the aforesaid conditions are satisfied, by a legal fiction, the transfer shall be deemed to have been made by fraud or coercion or undue influence. Such a transfer then becomes voidable at the instance of the transferor and the Maintenance Tribunal gets jurisdiction to declare the transfer as void.

14. When a senior citizen parts with his or her property by executing a gift or a release or otherwise in favour of his or her near and dear ones, a condition of looking after the senior citizen is not necessarily attached to it. On the contrary, very often, such transfers are made out of love and affection without any expectation in return. Therefore, when it is alleged that the conditions mentioned in sub-section (1) of Section 23 are attached to a transfer, existence of such conditions must be established before the Tribunal.



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15. Careful perusal of the petition under Section 23 filed by respondent no. 1 shows that it is not even pleaded that the release deed was executed subject to a condition that the transferees (the daughters of respondent no. 1) would provide the basic amenities and basic physical needs to respondent no. 1. Even in the impugned order dated 22nd May 2018 passed by the Maintenance Tribunal, no such finding has been recorded. It seems that oral evidence was not adduced by the parties. As can be seen from the impugned judgment of the Tribunal, immediately after a reply was filed by the appellant that the petition was fixed for arguments. Effecting transfer subject to a condition of providing the basic amenities and basic physical needs to the transferor - senior citizen is sine qua non for applicability of sub-section (1) of Section 23. In the present case, as stated earlier, it is not even pleaded by respondent no. 1 that the release deed was executed subject to such a condition.

16. We have perused the counter affidavit filed by respondent no. 1. Even in the counter, it is not pleaded that the release was subject to such a condition. It is merely pleaded that the appellant had no intention to take care of her mother. Thus, the order of the Maintenance Tribunal cannot be sustained as the twin conditions incorporated in sub-Section (1) of Section 23 were not satisfied. Unfortunately, the High Court has not adverted to the merits of the case at all.



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

17. There is an application for intervention on behalf of a developer. The intervenor claims that he is a bona fide buyer of a part of the land subject matter of the release deed from the appellant and that he has carried out substantial work of development. It is not necessary for us to deal with the rights claimed by the intervenor. All questions regarding the rights claimed by the intervenor are left open to be decided in appropriate proceedings.”

Thus, it is clear from the above judgment that there are two essential pre-conditions in order to invoke the provisions of Section 23 of the Act and that the documents should have been executed after coming into force of the Act and it should contain a clause imposing an obligation on the settlor or transferee to maintain settlor or transferee.

13. Section 23 of the Act provides that when a property has been transferred by way of gift or otherwise by the senior citizen on the condition that the transferee or ownee shall provide the basic amenities and basic physical needs to the transferor or the owner, but such transferee or ownee subsequently fails to provide such amenities, then it would be deemed that the transfer was made by fraud, or coercion or under undue influence and the transferor would have the option of



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

obtaining declaration that such transfer was void. In the case on hand, the father has settled the subject property to the son out of love and affection and as a reward for the respect, reward and care that the son had shown to the father.

14. On a perusal of the settlement deed, it reveals that being pleased with the care, love, affection, respect and good behaviour, the father had executed settlement deed as a reward in favour of his son and in discharge of his responsibilities towards the son, he has also given future security to the son. Further, though no consideration was passed for execution of settlement deed, the consideration for executing the settlement deed is based on human conduct, caring and conscious. The transfer was made admittedly out of love and affection. The settlor in the settlement deed would expect in the natural course of human conduct that the settlee continues to behave in the same manner as behaved before execution of the settlement deed. Therefore, it would form part of condition of the transaction for future conduct as well.



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

15. Thus, in the absence of any other circumstances, it must be presumed that the settlor expects continuation of the care and love from the settlee even after the execution of the settlement deed in the same manner, the settlor was taken care prior to the execution of the settlement deed. Further, the intention of the Legislature and terms of the Act would declare certain transfer as void, taking note of the fact that by taking advantage of the emotionally dependent senior citizens, relatives grab the property on the pretext of providing emotional support. Therefore, the Legislature thought that such transaction could be declared as void, as the conduct leading to the transaction was based on malice or fraud. Therefore, the condition referred under Section 23 has to be understood based on the conduct of the settlor and not with reference to the specific stipulation in the deed of transfer. Therefore, it is sufficient if the settlee breached the promise given to the settlor at the time of execution of the settlement deed.

16. Further, sub-Section 2 of Section 23 of the Act envisages the situation where a senior citizen has a right to receive the maintenance out of an estate. Where such a right exists, the right of maintenance can



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

be enforced, where the estate or a portion of it is transferred against a transferor, who has noticed the right or if the transfer is gracious. The right however cannot be enforced against a transferee for consideration without notice of right. It is also relevant to rely upon the judgement of this Court in the case of **Mohamed Dayan Vs. District Collector.**, order dated **08.09.2023** made in **W.P.No.28190 of 2022** in which this Court, after discussing various judgements of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India and various judgements of High Court including the cases referred by the learned Senior Counsel for the petitioner, held as follows:-

“33. Close reading of the principles considered by the various High Courts and the Supreme Court, there is no ambiguity with reference to the purpose and object sought to be achieved under the provisions of the Senior Citizen Act. Section 4(2) of the Act, unambiguously stipulates that the obligation of the children or the relative, as the case may be, to maintain a senior citizen extends to the needs of such citizen so that senior citizen may lead a normal life.

34. In the context of the adoption of the phrase “lead a normal life” Rule 20(2)(i) of the Maintenance of Senior Citizen Rules, enumerates that “it shall be the duty of the District Collector to ensure that life and property of senior citizens of the District are protected



and they are able to live with security and dignity”.

Therefore, normal life includes security and dignity.

Thus the normal life as indicated under Section 4(2) of the Act, is not mere life, but a life with security and dignity. In the context of Article 21 of the Constitution of India, life includes decent medical facility, food, shelter with dignity and security. All such combined necessities of human life is falling under the term “Normal Life” emboldened under Section 4(2) of the Senior Citizen Act. Therefore, simply providing food and shelter would be insufficient. But life includes providing of decent medical facilities, food, shelter and other requirements with dignity in commensuration with the status of the family and taking into consideration of the living style of the senior citizen throughout.

35. Therefore, the children defending their case merely on the ground that they are willing to provide food and shelter, cannot be taken as a ground for the purpose of sustaining the Settlement Deed executed by the senior citizen. The requirement of the provisions are to be complied in its real spirit and in the event of an iota of doubt, the Authority Competent is empowered to cancel the Settlement Deed or Gift Deed, as the case may be, in order to protect the normal life of senior citizen.

36. Section 4(3) denotes, the obligation of the children to maintain his or her parent extends to the



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

needs of such parent either father or mother or both, as the case may be, so that such parents may lead a normal life. Therefore, it is an obligation on the part of the children to maintain his or her parents and ensure the parents to lead a normal life. In the event of complaint, the Authorities Competent are expected to ensure that the senior citizen and their life and dignity are protected. The above provision is to be read in conjunction with the Rules framed under the Act.

37. Rule 20 of the Maintenance of Senior Citizen Rules, provide duties and powers of the District Collector. The District Collector is casted upon the duty to ensure that the life and property of citizens of the District are protected and other people to live with security and dignity. Therefore, it is the statutory duty on the part of the District Collector to protect the safety and security of senior citizens in his District. Thus the complaint filed by the senior citizen, cannot be treated lightly. Such complaints are to be enquired into in a pragmatic manner, so as to understand the real grievances of the senior citizen and accordingly, all appropriate actions are to be initiated to provide safety, security and to protect the dignity of the senior citizen.

38. The Kerala High Court observed in the case of Radhamani and Others (cited supra), Section 23(1) of the Senior Citizen Act, cannot be interpreted to the



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W.P.No.19363 of 2022

disadvantage of the senior citizen. Section 23(1) of the Act contemplates that “Where any senior citizen who, after the commencement of this Act, has by way of gift or otherwise, his property, subject to the condition that the transferee shall provide the basic amenities and basic physical needs to the transferor and such transferee refuses or fails to provide such amenities and physical needs, the said transfer of property shall be deemed to have been made by fraud or coercion or under undue influence and shall at the option of the transferor be declared void by the Tribunal”. The phrase “ subject to the condition that the transferee shall provide the basic amenities” does not mean that the Gift or Settlement Deed should contain any such condition expressly. “Subject to the condition” as employed in Section 23(1), is to be holistically understood with reference to the subsequent phrase i.e., “deemed to have been made by fraud or coercion or undue influence”. Both the phrases would amplify that the deeming clause should be considered so as to form an opinion that the phrase “subject to condition” amounts to an implied condition to maintain the senior citizen and any violation would be sufficient for the purpose of invoking Section 23(1) of the Act, to cancel the Gift or Settlement Deed executed by the senior citizen.



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39. To elaborate, the phrase “subject to condition” employed under Section 23(1) of the Act, is to be understood with reference to the love and affection by the senior citizen towards the person in favour of whom such Gift or Settlement Deed has been executed.

40. “Love and Affection” is an implied condition in the context of Section 23(1) of the Act, and therefore, there need not be any express condition in the Settlement Deed for the purpose of maintaining the senior citizen. Refusal of maintenance after executing the Settlement Deed or Gift Deed, is the ground for invoking the deemed ground of fraud or coercion or undue influence. When the deeming clause has been incorporated under the provisions of Section 23(1) of the Act, 'Love and Affection' to be construed as the consideration for executing the Gift or Settlement Deed. Thus the condition need not be expressly made in the document and the love and affection, which resulted in execution of the Deed by the senior citizen is to be construed as a condition for the purpose of invoking the deeming clause for declaring the document as fraud or coercion or undue influence.

41. The entire purpose and object of the Senior Citizens Act, is to consider the human conduct towards them. When the human conduct is indifferent towards senior citizen and their security and dignity are not protected, then the provisions of the Act, is to be pressed



into service to safeguard the security and dignity of senior citizen. Therefore, the purposive interpretation of the provisions are of paramount importance and Section 23 of the Act, cannot be mis-utilised for the purpose of rejecting the complaint filed by the senior citizen on the ground that there is no express condition for maintaining the senior citizen. Even in the absence of any express condition in the document, “Love and Affection” being the consideration for execution of Gift or Settlement Deed, such love and affection becomes a deeming consideration and any violation is a ground to invoke Section 23(1) of the Act. Thus there is no infirmity in respect of the order passed by the second respondent in the present case.

42. The human conduct in the context of the senior citizen Act, is to be understood considering the relationship between the senior citizen and the beneficiaries of the Gift or Settlement Deed. Mostly the parents are executing the document in favour of their children. Since they may not be in a position to maintain the property at their old-age and more-so, they are intending to visibly express their love and affection towards their children by settling their properties. In some cases, the parents during their old-age are settling their property in order to avoid conflict between their children and to ensure that all children get equal share.



If at all the parents decide to settle the property in favour of a son or daughter, then they are doing so, only with love and affection and with a fond hope that they will be taken care of by the son or daughter during their old-age. Thus love and affection, being the consideration and implied condition, within the meaning of Section 23(1) of the Act. The subsequent non-maintenance of senior citizen would attract Section 23(1) of the Act and the Authorities in such circumstances are empowered to declare the document as null and void.

43. Therefore, Section 23 is referable as a conduct of the transferee prior to and after execution of the Deed of Gift or Settlement, as the case may be. For all purposes, Section 23 is to be understood taking note of the conduct of the transferee and not with reference to the specific stipulation of condition in the Deed of Gift or Settlement.

44. In respect of the judgment relied on by the petitioner in the case of Sudesh Chhikara vs. Ramti Devi and Another (cited supra), the Three Judges Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of S.Vanitha vs. Deputy Commissioner, Bengaluru Urban and District and Others (cited supra) is to be followed. There are several judgments to establish that the purpose and object of the Senior Citizens Act, is to be complied with in its letter and spirit in order to protect the life, security



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

and dignity of senior citizens. Thus the judgment relied on by the petitioner is of no avail as far as the present facts and circumstances of the case on hand is concerned.”

The above case is squarely applicable to the case on hand.

17. On perusal of the complaint lodged by the petitioner revealed that the second respondent had driven out the petitioner from his house. His belongings were also thrown out from his house. Thereafter, the petitioner suffered with mental agony and he could not maintain himself. Further, the second respondent failed to maintain the petitioner from providing any maintenance to him. Therefore, though the petitioner filed civil suit and failed before the civil Court, the complaint lodged under Section 23(2) of the Act is very much maintainable, since the allegations leveled in the complaint are clearly made out *prima facie* case to entertain the said complaint under Section 23(2) of the Act. Therefore, the findings of the civil Court is nothing to do with the complaint lodged by the petitioner under Section 23(2) of the Act.



W.P.No.19363 of 2022

18. In view of the above discussions, the order passed by the first respondent cannot be sustained and liable to be quashed.

Accordingly, the order dated 27.04.2022, passed by the first respondent in Sa.Mu.Na.Ka. No.4017/A1/2021, is hereby quashed and the cancellation of settlement deed dated 28.01.2015 registered vide document No.350 of 2015, on the file of the Sub Registrar, Konnur is valid one. The second respondent is directed to hand over the vacant possession of the subject property to the petitioner forthwith.

19. With the above directions, the Writ Petition stands allowed.

There shall be no order as to costs.

14.06.2024

Index : Yes/No
Speaking/Non Speaking order
Neutral Citation : Yes/No
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To

1. The District Collector,
No.62, Rajaji Salai,
M.Singaravelar Maaligai,
4th Floor, Chennai Collectorate,
Chennai – 600 001.



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W.P.No.19363 of 2022

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ORDER IN
W.P.No.19363 of 2022

14.06.2024