



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATE : 09.08.2024

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE G.K.ILANTHIRAIYAN

W.P.No.21020 of 2024
and W.M.P.No.22977 of 2024

A.S.Suganthi @ V.Sukanthi

... Petitioner

-Vs-

1. The Revenue Divisional Officer,
Tiruchengode Cum Parents,
Senior Citizens Maintenance and
Welfare Tribunal,
Tiruchengode,
Namakkal District.

2. P.Sengodan

3. A.SE.Angkammal

...Respondents

Prayer: Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India for issuance of a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records of the first respondent herein culminating in the impugned proceedings vide No.4723/2023/A dated 24.01.2024 and quash the same.

For Petitioner : Mr.M.Santhanaraman

For Respondents

For R1 : Mr.P.Surunathan

Additional Government Pleader

For R2 & R3 : Mr.S.T.S.Moorthy, Senior Counsel

For Mr.R.Hari



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

ORDER

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This writ petition has been filed challenging the proceedings initiated by the first respondent in No.4723/2023/A dated 24.01.2024, on the compliant lodged by the respondents 2 & 3 under Sections 5 & 23 of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizen Act, 2017 (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”).

2. The petitioner is the daughter of the respondents 2 & 3 herein and she got married one Velmurugan. Before her marriage, her entire family had been in the real estate business in the name and style of Sri SPK Real Estate. A partnership deed was entered into between the petitioner and her parents and brother on 18.06.2003 and they had purchased several properties in the name of the firm. Apart from the said firm, they have a school in the name of SPK Matriculation Higher Secondary School and Sri SPK Public School (CBSE) in Tiruchengode. Both the schools were managed by a trust called SPK Educational Trust, in which the petitioner was a trustee and managing director.

3. While being so, there was an *interse* dispute between them



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

and therefore a memorandum of understanding was executed on 15.07.2015 among the family members. Pursuant to which, the petitioner had resigned from the trusteeship and the post of managing director and relinquished her rights. Upon her resignation, her brother and sister-in-law were inducted as new trustees in the trust. As per the memorandum of understanding, some of the properties were settled in favour of the petitioner by the respondents 2 & 3 by the registered settlement deeds dated 12.10.2015, registered vide documents Nos.6585, 6587, 6590, 3352, 6403 & 6404 of 2015.

4. Thereafter, there was a dispute between the petitioners and her family members resulted in so many writ petitions and registration of FIRs. Therefore, the respondents 2 & 3 lodged complaint by invoking provision under Section 3 & 23 of the Act and the same has been taken cognizance by the first respondent. Hence, the petitioner filed the present writ petition with the above prayer.

5. The learned counsel appearing for the petitioner submitted that the complaint can be maintained by fulfilling two conditions as per



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

Section 23(1) of the Act. The first condition is that, the settlement deeds should have been executed after coming into force of the Act and the second one is, it should contain a specific clause imposing an obligation on the settlee or transferee to maintain settlor or transferor. Though the first condition has been fulfilled, the respondents 2 & 3 failed to fulfill the second conditions. As per the settlement deed, there is no specific clause that the petitioner shall maintain the respondents 2 & 3 till their life time.

5.1. In support of his contention, he 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 ***Civil Appeal No. 174 of 2021***, which reads as follows:-

“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.*



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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.

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



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

WEB COPY

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.

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-



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

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 settlee or transferee to maintain the settlor of transferor.

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

7. The respondents 2 & 3 lodged complaint to cancel the settlement deeds executed in favour of the petitioner on 12.10.2015 vide document Nos.6585, 6587, 6590, 3352, 6403 & 6404 of 2015. On perusal of the settlement deed executed in favour of the petitioner revealed that the respondents 2 & 3 had settled the property in order to make arrangement for the petitioner during their life time to settle her down. It was executed due to love and affection on the petitioner. 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



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

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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.

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.



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

8. 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 obtaining declaration that such transfer was void.

9. On a perusal of the settlement deed, it reveals that in order to make arrangement, the respondents 2 & 3 had executed settlement deeds in favour of the petitioner and in discharge of their responsibilities towards the daughter, they have also given future security to their daughter. 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



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

transaction for future conduct as well.

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10. 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.

11. 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



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

of an estate. Where such a right exists, the right of maintenance can 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 the High Court including the cases referred by the learned counsel appearing 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



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W.P.No.21020 of 2024

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.



WEB COPY



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

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



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W.P.No.21020 of 2024

Radhamani and Others (cited supra), Section 23(1) of the Senior Citizen Act, cannot be interpreted to the 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.



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

WEB COPY

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



WEB COPY



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

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



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W.P.No.21020 of 2024

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 and dignity of



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

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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.

12. On perusal of the complaint lodged by the respondents 2 & 3 revealed that the petitioner assured that she will maintain the respondents 2 & 3 with love and affection as before the execution of settlement deed. Thereafter, the respondents 2 & 3 found that the petitioner misrepresented and on false promise, they had executed the settlement deeds in her favour. Therefore, there are specific allegations in order to attract the provision under Section 23 of the Act.

13. In view of the above reasons stated, the complaint lodged by the respondents 2 & 3 in proceedings No.4723/2023/A dated 24.01.2024 is very well maintainable before the first respondent and the writ petition is devoid of merits and liable to be dismissed. The first respondent is directed to proceed further with due enquiry after giving opportunity of hearing to the petitioner and the respondents 2 & 3 and to pass appropriate order on merits and in accordance with law, within a period



W.P.No.21020 of 2024

of twelve weeks from the date of receipt of a copy of this Order.

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W.P.No.21020 of 2024

14. With the above directions, the Writ Petition stands dismissed. Consequently, connected miscellaneous petition is closed.

There shall be no order as to costs.

09.08.2024

Index : Yes/No

Speaking/Non Speaking order

Neutral Citation : Yes/No

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To

1. The Revenue Divisional Officer,
Tiruchengode Cum Parents,
Senior Citizens Maintenance and
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Tiruchengode,
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W.P.No.21020 of 2024

G.K.ILANTHIRAIYAN. J.

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W.P.No.21020 of 2024
and W.M.P.No.22977 of 2024

09.08.2024