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W.P.No.23316 of 2024

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 09.09.2024

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE **G.K.ILANTHIRAIYAN**

W.P.No.23316 of 2024

and

W.M.P.Nos.25466 & 25468 of 2024

Periyammal

.... Petitioner

Vs

1.The District Collector,
Kallakurichi District.

2.The District Revenue Officer,
Kallakurichi District.

3.The Revenue Divisional Officer,
Kallakurichi District.

4.The Sub-Registrar Officer,
Vadakananth Sub Registrar Office,
Kallakurichi District.

5.Premkumar

.... Respondents

Prayer : Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of Constitution of India praying for the issuance of a Writ of Certiorari to call for the records pertaining to the impugned order dated 04.07.2024 in order Appeal No.1059/A1/2023 passed by the first respondent and quash the same.



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W.P.No.23316 of 2024

For Petitioner : Mr.T.Balachandran
For R1 to R4 : Mr.M.S.Arasa Kumar
Government Advocate
For R5 : Mr.S.Pari

ORDER

This Writ Petition has been filed challenging the order passed by the first respondent dated 04.07.2024, thereby dismissing the appeal and confirming the order passed by the third respondent dated 28.03.2023, thereby ordered only maintenance of Rs.1,500/- per month in favour of the petitioner payable by the fifth respondent and rejected the request made by the petitioner to cancel the settlement in favour of the fifth respondent.

2. Heard the learned counsel appearing on either side and perused the materials available on record.

3. The petitioner is the grandmother of the fifth respondent. The petitioner got married to one Selvayan and gave birth to three male children and three female children. The petitioner and her husband owned property admeasuring 1.38 acres comprised in survey No.134/3A and the land admeasuring 0.30 cents comprised in survey No/134/3B along with common



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

right in the well and electricity service connection. On the assurance given by the fifth respondent in order to maintain the petitioner, they executed a Settlement Deed in favour of the fifth respondent dated 09.06.2022 registered vide Document No.1626 of 2022 due to love and affection with a fond hope to maintain in future.

4. After executing the settlement deed, the fifth respondent failed to maintain the petitioner and her husband. The petitioner and her husband were driven out and they were struggling their livelihood. Therefore, the petitioner lodged a complaint under Section 23(1) of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007. After the enquiry, the third respondent ordered only maintenance of Rs.1,500/- per month payable by the fifth respondent on the undertaken given by the fifth respondent to maintain the petitioner. Aggrieved by the same, the petitioner preferred an appeal before the first respondent and the same was also rejected and confirming the order passed by the third respondent.

5. The learned counsel appearing for the fifth respondent submitted that the settlement was executed in favour of the fifth respondent.



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

Subsequently, the fifth respondent executed a settlement deed in favour of his wife on 17.06.2022 registered vide Document No.1723 of 2022. That apart, the settlement deed did not contain that the fifth respondent shall maintain the petitioner, failing which, the settlement deed will be cancelled. In support of his contention he relied upon the Judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India reported in **2022 SCC online SC 1684** in the case of ***Sudesh Chhikara Vs. Ramti Devi and another.***

6. It is relevant to extract the provision under Section 23(i) of the Act, which reads 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 transferred 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.”



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

7. On a perusal of the settlement deed, it reveals that being pleased with the care, love, affection, respect and good behaviour, the grandmother had executed settlement deed as a reward in favour of his grandson and in discharge of his responsibilities towards the grandson, she has also given future security to the grandson. 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.

8. 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



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

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.

9. 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 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:-



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

“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.



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

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 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*



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

WEB COPY

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 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



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

WEB COPY

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.

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,



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

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



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

WEB COPY

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.”

10. The above case is squarely applicable to the case on hand. In respect of the judgment relied on by the third respondent in the case of **Sudesh**



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

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

11. That apart, the intention of the fifth respondent is very clear from the execution of subsequent settlement deed dated 17.06.2022. The petitioner and her husband had executed a settlement deed in favour of the fifth respondent registered vide Document No.1626 of 2022 in respect of the subject property. In turn, the fifth respondent, within a period of eight days, settled the property in favour of his wife. Therefore, in order to grab the property, the fifth respondent assured the petitioner and her husband as if he will maintain their livelihood and obtained the property by way of settlement deed. Therefore, the respondents 1 to 3 ought to have allowed the complaint lodged by the petitioner in toto.



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

12. On perusal of the complaint lodged by the petitioner revealed that the third respondent had driven out the petitioner and her husband from his house. Therefore, there are specific allegations in order to attract the provision under Section 23 of the Act. Unfortunately, both the respondents 1 & 3 failed to consider the above aspects and mechanically dismissed the complaint lodged by the petitioner. In view of the above reasons stated, this Court finds infirmity and illegality in the orders passed by the respondents 1 & 3 as such, the impugned orders cannot be sustained and are liable to be quashed.

13. Accordingly, the order passed by the first respondent dated 04.07.2024, and the order passed by the third respondent dated 28.03.2023, are hereby quashed. The complaint lodged by the petitioner is allowed and the settlement deed dated 09.06.2022 registered vide document No.1626 of 2022, executed in favour of the fourth respondent, is declared as null and void as sham and nominal. In view of the declaration of the settlement deed as null and void, the subsequent settlement deed executed by the fifth respondent in favour of his wife is invalid. The fifth respondent is directed to hand over the vacant possession of the subject property to the petitioner and her husband forthwith.



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

14. With the above direction, this writ petition stands allowed.

Consequently, connected miscellaneous petitions are closed. No costs.

09.09.2024

Internet: Yes

Index : Yes/No

Speaking/Non Speaking order

Lpp

To

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WEB COPY



W.P.No.23316 of 2024

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Lpp

W.P.No.23316 of 2024

09.09.2024