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W.P(MD)No.308

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED : 08.01.2024

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MRS.JUSTICE V.BHAVANI SUBBAROYAN

W.P(MD)No.30835 of 2023

Manikandan

... Petitioner

-Vs-

1.The Regional Passport Officer,
Bharathi Ula Veethi,
Race Course Road,
Madurai – 625 002.

2.The Inspector of Police,
Tirunelveli City Crime Branch,
Tirunelveli District.
(In Crime No.35 of 2014)

... Respondents

PRAYER:- Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying for the issuance of a Writ of Mandamus directing the first respondent to consider the petitioner's application for renewal of passport, dated 25.10.2022 and thereby renew the petitioner's passport by considering the petitioner's representation dated 23.11.2023 within the time frame that may be stipulated by this Court.

For Petitioner

: Mr.A.Robinson

For R1

: Mr.C.Nandagopal

Central Government Standing Counsel

For R2

: Mrs.M.Aasha

Government Advocate (Crl.side)



ORDER

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The writ petition is filed seeking for issuance of a Writ of Mandamus directing the first respondent to consider the petitioner's application for renewal of passport, dated 25.10.2022 by considering the petitioner's representation, dated 23.11.2023 within the time frame that may be stipulated by this Court.

2. It is stated by the petitioner that while he was working at Shriram Transport Finance Company Limited as Branch Credit Manager, certain irregularities were committed by other employees. Hence, a case in Crime No.35 of 2014 came to be registered against several other persons, who worked with him. Creating bogus company, the first accused along with other accused said to have availed loan from the said Company by forging the RTO seal and signature. After investigation, final report has been filed before the Judicial Magistrate No.I, Tirunelveli and the same was taken on file in C.C.No.338 of 2015. On verification of the account number of A2, it is seen that a sum of Rs.4,000/- was transferred on 01.06.2012 to the petitioner's account. Except the above allegation, there is no allegation against the petitioner.

3. It is further stated that the petitioner has got married in the year 2012. Prior to his marriage, the second accused was working as a Executive Manager in the



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Palayamkottai Branch. During the time of his marriage, A2 got transferred to some other place. As a gift to the marriage, A2 had sent a sum of Rs.4,000/- to the petitioner through his bank account. After receipt of the clarification notice from the passport officer, the petitioner has sent a representation dated 23.11.2023 to the first respondent. However, the said representation has not been considered.

4. It is further stated that the petitioner's sister is residing at London and she is pregnant and due for delivery. In order to take care of his sister, the petitioner's mother has to go to London and the petitioner has also should accompany her to London. Hence, the petitioner sent representations dated 25.10.2022 and 23.11.2023 to the respondents. Since the said representations have not been considered so far, he has filed the present writ petition.

5. The learned Government Advocate (crl. side) appearing for the second respondent would submit that in this case, charge sheet has been filed and the same has been taken on file as C.C.No.338 of 2015 by the Judicial Magistrate No.I, Tirunelveli. Hence, the petitioner has to approach the concerned Court. The Petitioner is under criminal investigation and only after the completion of trial, the first respondent can decide the issue and pass appropriate orders.



6. This Court had an occasion to deal with a similar issue in W.P.(MD) No.7056 of 2017 in the case of *N.Chandrababu vs. the Sub Inspector of Police and another.*

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The relevant portions in the order dated 21.04.2017 are extracted hereunder:

“3)..... At this juncture, it may be relevant to discuss the legal position with regard to the right of a person facing criminal prosecution to demand issuance of passport. To decide this issue, it may be necessary to extract the following legal provisions from the Passports Act, 1967.

'Section 5(2) of the Passports Act, 1967

On receipt of an application under this section, the passport authority, after making such inquiry, if any, as it may consider necessary, shall, subject to the other provisions of this Act, by order in writing,-

(a) issue the passport or travel document with endorsement, or, as the case may be, make on the passport or travel document the endorsement, in respect of the foreign countries specified in the application; or

(b) issue the passport or travel document with endorsement, or, as the case may be, make on the passport or travel document the endorsement, in respect of one or more of the foreign countries specified in the application and refuse to make an endorsement in respect of the other country or countries ; or

(c) refuse to issue the passport or travel document or, as the case may be, refuse to make on the passport or travel document any endorsement.



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Section 6(2) of the Passports Act, 1967.

Subject to the other provisions of this Act, the passport authority shall refuse to issue a passport or travel document for visiting any foreign country under clause (c) of sub-section (2) of section 5 on any one or more of the following grounds, an on no other ground,

- (a) that the applicant is not a citizen of India;
- (b) that the applicant may, or is likely to, engage outside India in activities prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India;
- (c) that the departure of the applicant from India may, or is likely to, be detrimental to the security of India;
- (d) that the presence of the applicant outside India may, or is likely to, prejudice the friendly relations of India with any foreign country;
- (e) that the applicant has, at an time during the period of five years immediately preceding the date of his application, been convicted by a Court in India for any offence involving moral turpitude and sentenced in respect thereof to imprisonment for not less than two years;
- (f) that proceedings in respect of an offence alleged to have been committed by the applicant are pending before a Criminal Court in India;
- (g) that a warrant or summons for the appearance, or a warrant for the arrest, of the applicant has been issued by a Court under any law for the time being in force or that an order prohibiting the departure from India of the applicant has been made by any such Court;
- (h) that the applicant has been repatriated and has not reimbursed the expenditure incurred in connection with such repatriation;
- (i) that in the opinion of the Central Government the issue of a passport or travel document to the



applicant will not be in the public interest.

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4) For deciding the issue at hand, Section 6(2)(f) will be relevant. A reading of the said provisions shows that the power of the Passport Authority to refuse issuance of passport under Section 5(2)(c) is governed by Section 6(2). Thus, for any of the reasons given in Clause (a) to (i) of Section 6(2), the Passport Authorities can refuse to issue a passport in exercise of power under Section 5(2)(c). The Parliament, in its wisdom, has conferred the aforesaid power, which is administrative in nature, on the Passport Authority. The Central Government has issued the following Notification dated 25.08.1993, for regulating the exercise of power by the Passport Authority under Section 6(2 (f):

“In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (a) of Section 22 of the Passports Act 1967 (15 of 1967) and in supersession of the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of External Affairs No.G.S.R. 298(E), dated the 14th April, 1976, the Central Government, being of the opinion that it is necessary in public interest to do so, hereby exempts citizens of India against whom proceedings in respect of an offence alleged to have been committed by them are pending before a criminal court in India and who produce orders from the court concerned permitting them to depart from India, from the operation of the provisions of Clause (f) of sub-section (2) of Section 6 of the said Act, subject to the following conditions, namely:

(a) The passport to be issued to every such citizen shall be issued:-

(i) for the period specified in order of the court referred to above, if the court specifies a period for which the passport has to be issued; or



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- (ii) if no period either for the issue of the passport or for the travel abroad is specified in such order, the passport shall be issued for a period one year
- (iii) if such order gives permission to travel abroad for a period less than one year, but does not specify the period validity of the passport, the passport shall be issued for one year; or
- (iv) if such order gives permission to travel abroad for a period exceeding one year, and does not specify the validity of the passport, then the passport shall be issued for the period of travel abroad specified in the order.

(b) any passport issued in terms of (a) (ii) and (a) (iii) above can be further renewed for one year at a time, provided the applicant has not travelled abroad for the period sanctioned by the court; and provided further that, in the meantime, the order of the court is not cancelled or modified;

(c) any passport issued in terms of (a) (I) above can be further renewed only on the basis of a fresh court order specifying a further period of validity of the passport or specifying a period for travel abroad;

(d) the said citizen shall give an undertaking in writing to the passport issuing authority that he shall, if required by the court concerned, appear before it at any time during the continuance in force of the passport so issued.

5. From a reading of the aforesaid Notification, in the opinion of this Court, the expression 'concerned Court' will mean the Court before whom the person is facing the prosecution. In this case, had there not been a quash petition pending, the 'concerned Court' would be the learned Judicial Magistrate No.V, Trichy before whom the petitioner is facing trial in C.C.No.21 of 2015. However, this Court, in exercise of its power under Section 482 of Cr.P.C., has admitted CrI.O.P.(MD)No.3533 of 2017 and



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has granted stay of all further proceedings in C.C.No. 21 of 2015 on the file of Judicial Magistrate No.V, Trichy. Under such circumstances, the expression 'concerned Court' in the context of the present case will mean the High Court and not the Judicial Magistrate No.V, Trichy.”

7. This Court also had another occasion to consider the same issue in CrI.O.P(MD) No.5068 of 2018 in ***Noushad Thazhaith vs. State, rep.by the Deputy Superintendent of Police and another.*** The relevant portions of the order are extracted hereunder:

"The petitioner is facing trial in PRC No.2 of 2013 before the Judicial Magistrate No.III, Coimbatore for the offences under Section 4 (a) and 6 r/w 4(G) of the Explosive Substance Act, 1908. The petitioner has filed a quash application in CrI.O.P.No.3532 of 2018 challenging the prosecution and the same is pending before this Court. The petitioner is the holder of Indian Passport bearing No. H5939876 issued at Kozhikode, Kerala on 09.09.2009 valid upto 08.09.2019.

2.It is the case of the petitioner that he has business interest in the Middle East and that he has been going abroad frequently on valid visa. It is his further case that the pages in his passport got exhausted and therefore, when he applied for a fresh passport, the Passport Authorities directed him to obtain necessary permission under Section 6(2)(f) r/w Section 22 of the Passports Act r/w Notification No. GSR 570 E dated 25.08.1993. Hence, the petitioner has filed the present application for permission.

3.Heard Mr.N.Manokaran, learned counsel for the petitioner, Mr.C.Raghavan for the respondent Police and



Mr.N.Vijaya Baskar for 2nd respondent Passport Authorities.

4.Under normal circumstances, in a case of this nature, this Court would not grant permission for the petitioner to go abroad. However, it is seen that this petitioner has been granted permission earlier by the learned Judicial Magistrate No.III, Coimbatore vide order dated 03.11.2015 in CMP.No.4280/2015 and by this Court in CrI.O.P.No. 22055/2016 dated 10.02.2017. The learned Judicial Magistrate No.III, Coimbatore in his order dated 03.11.2015 has noted that the petitioner has been appearing regularly before the Court from 2013 onwards and because of the failure of the prosecution to summon the co-accused, the Magistrate has not been able to commit the case to the Court of Sessions. Only this aspect has weighed in the mind of this Court for positively considering the request of the petitioner. The law with regard to grant of permission for renewal of passport has been settled by this Court in N.Chandrababu vs. Sub Inspector of Police Palakkarai Police Station, Trichy [2017 (3) CTC 493] and it may not be necessary to recapitulate the legal propositions.

5.Suffice it to say that, when a criminal case is pending before a Court, passport can be issued or renewed only on the basis of production of orders from the concerned Court permitting the applicant to depart from India. In notification NOGSR 570 B, the conditions under which a passport or travel documents could be issued has been enumerated. Taking into consideration the earlier conduct of the petitioner, as noted by the Judicial Magistrate No.III in his order dated 03.11.2015, this Court grants permission to the petitioner to depart from India and return within a period of eight months from the date of this order. Exemption is granted to the petitioner from the operations of the provisions of Clause (f) sub section (2) of section 6 of the Passports Act, for a period of eight months from the date of this order. The petitioner shall abide by the conditions set out in the notification dated 25.08.1993”.



The above order was also followed in the subsequent order passed in CrI.O.P.No.7220 of 2019 dated 07.06.2019.

8.The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, has issued a statutory notification in GSR.570(E) dated 25.08.1993 with certain guidelines by providing relief to those applicants against whom criminal proceedings are pending before the Courts that they can obtain the passport by obtaining No Objection Certificate from the concerned Court and also by filing an undertaking as prescribed in the notification.

9. Taking into consideration the facts and circumstances of the case, this Court is inclined to dispose the Writ Petition with the following directions:-

(a)The Petitioner has to approach the concerned Court where the case is pending, seeking for permission to go abroad and for issuance of appropriate passport;

(b)Suffice it to say that, when a criminal case is pending before a Court, passport can be issued or renewed only on the basis of production of orders from the concerned Court permitting the applicant to depart from India;

(c)On such issuance/renewal, the petitioner shall come over to India and take immediate steps to participate in the criminal proceedings and work out his remedy and defend himself in the



case;

(d) The petitioner shall also file a memo before the concerned Court, where the criminal case is pending and bring to the notice of the said Court, the orders passed in this writ petition.

10. With the above directions, the Writ Petition stands disposed of. No costs.

08.01.2024

NCC : Yes/No
Index : Yes/No
Internet : Yes
skn/am

To

1. The Regional Passport Officer,
Bharathi Ula Veethi,
Race Course Road,
Madurai – 625 002.

2. The Inspector of Police,
Tirunelveli City Crime Branch,
Tirunelveli District.



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V.BHAVANI SUBBAROYAN, J.

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