
(2019) 03 MP CK 0021

In the Madhya Pradesh High Court

Case No : Writ Petition No. 29462 Of 2018

Rajesh Sharma

APPELLANT

Vs

State Of Madhya Pradesh & Others

RESPONDENT

Date of Decision : 07-03-2019

Acts Referred:

Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 — Rule 47, 81
Madhya Pradesh Motor Vehicle Rules, 1994 — Rule 47

Citation : (2019) 03 MP CK 0021

Hon'ble Judges : S.C. Sharma, J;Virender Singh, J

Bench : Division Bench

Advocate : Amit Pal, Ravindra Singh Chhabra

Final Decision : Allowed

Judgement

1. The petitioner before this Court has filed this present petition by way of Public Interest Litigation stating that the respondents are not registering the vehicles, which are Bharat Stage-III, purchased on or before 31.03.2017. The petitioner has given examples of three vehicles in para-4 and 5 of the writ petition.

2. The first case referred by the petitioner relates to one Jitender Charbota, Tehsil - Barnagar, District - Ujjain and it has been stated that a vehicle was purchased by one Jitendra on 07.04.2014 and he has submitted an application for registration only on 06.04.2017 and his vehicle is not being registered.

3. The second example given by the petitioner is in respect of one Sher Singh and it has been stated that Sher Singh has purchased the vehicle on 02.09.2015 and he has applied for registration on 06.04.2017 and the vehicle is not being registered by the Transport Department.

4. The third example is of Manglesh Sharma again the resident of Ujjain and it has been stated that he has purchased the vehicle on 07.11.2014 and has applied for registration only on 03.09.2018 and his vehicle is not being registered.

5. A prayer has been made in the writ petition to direct the respondents to register all such vehicles, which have been bought prior to 31.03.2017 and which are Bharat Stage-III vehicles.

6. A reply has been filed by the State of Madhya Pradesh and Shri Ravindra Singh Chhabra, learned Additional Advocate General has argued before this Court that present petition is certainly not a Public Interest Litigation. It is a case of individuals, who after purchasing the vehicle, were sitting tight up over the matter, they were plying the vehicle without registration and now they want to get their vehicles registered under the garb of the present Public Interest Litigation writ petition.

He has stated that in case the vehicles of the individuals are not being registered by the Transport Department or the application for registration of vehicle is rejected, there is a remedy available under the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989. He has further stated that the applications submitted by the three persons in the year 2017-18 were processed, which are submitted after a lapse of three or four years and vehicle has been registered. He has also stated that Rule 47 provides for registering a vehicle within 30 days' and as the same has not been done, the State shall be recovering the penalty in accordance with law from the owners of the vehicle. However, the penalty has not been recovered only because of the pendency of the present writ petition.

7. Heard learned counsel for the parties at length and perused the record.

8. In the present case, there is certainly an order passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of M.C. Mehta v/s Union of India & Others in Writ Petition (Civil) No.13029/1985 dated 29.03.2017. The operative paragraph of the aforesaid order reads as under:-

"On balance, in our opinion, the submission of the learned Amicus deserves to be accepted keeping in mind the potential health hazard of such vehicles being introduced on the road affecting millions of our people in the country. The number of such vehicles may be small compared to the overall number of the vehicles in the country but the health of the people is far, far more important than the commercial interests of the manufacturers of the loss that they are likely to suffer in respect of the so-called small number of such vehicles. The manufacturers of such vehicles were fully aware that eventually from 1st April, 2017 they would be required to manufacture only BS-IV compliant vehicles but for reasons that are not clear, they chose to sit back and declined to take sufficient pro-active steps.

Accordingly, for detailed reasons that will follow, we direct that:

(a) On and from 1st April, 2017 such vehicles that are not BS-IV compliant shall not be sold in India by any manufacturer or dealer, that is to say that such vehicles whether two wheeler, three wheeler, four wheeler and commercial vehicles will not be sold in India by any manufacturer or dealer on and from 1st

April, 2017.

(b) All the vehicle registering authorities under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 are prohibited for registering such vehicles on and from 1st April, 2017 that do not meet BS-IV emission standards, except on proof that such a vehicle has already been sold on or before 31st March, 2017.

As mentioned above, detailed reasons for the above order will be given in due course."

The aforesaid order makes it very clear that from 01.04.2017, the vehicles, which are not BS-IV, shall not be sold by any manufacturer or dealer. The order also makes it very clear that registering authorities are prohibited for registering the vehicles, which are not BS-IV compliant w.e.f. 01.04.2017, however, those vehicles, which were purchased prior to 31.03.2017, can be registered.

9. In the present case, the petitioner has given three examples i.e. of Jitender Charbota, Sher Singh and Manglesh Sharma and they purchased their vehicles in the year 2014 and 2015. For the reasons best known to them, for the first time, they have submitted application on 06.04.2017 and 03.09.2018, meaning thereby, they were plying the vehicles without registration for all these years i.e. three to four years. The respondents have registered the vehicle in question because there is an order of the Supreme Court.

10. Rule 47 of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 reads as under:-

"47. Application for registration of motor vehicles.-(1) An application for registration of a motor vehicle shall be made in Form 20 to the registering authority within a period of [seven days] from the date of taking delivery of such vehicle, excluding the period of journey and shall be accompanied by-

(a) sale certificate in Form 21;

(b) valid insurance certificate;

[(c) copy of the proceedings of the State Transport Authority or Transport Commissioner or such other authorities as may be prescribed by the State Government for the purpose of approval of the design in the case of a trailer or a semi-trailer;]

(d) original sale certificate from the concerned authorities in Form 21 in the case of ex-army vehicles;

(e) proof of address by way of any one of the documents referred to in rule 4;

(f) temporary registration, if any;

(g) road-worthiness certificate in Form 22 from the manufacturers, [Form 22-A from the body builders];

(h) custom's clearance certificate in the case of imported vehicles along with the

licence and bond, if any:

Provided that in the case of imported vehicles other than those imported under the Baggage Rules, 1998, the procedure followed by the registering authority shall be same as those procedure followed for registering of vehicles manufactured in India, and]

(i) appropriate fee as specified in rule 81.

(2) In respect of vehicles temporarily registered, application under sub-rule (1) shall be made before the temporary registration expires."

The aforesaid rule makes it very clear that an application in Form 20 has to be made within seven days from taking delivery of the vehicle for its registration.

11. No subsequent amendment has been brought to the notice of this Court. Rule 47 of M.P. Motor Vehicle Rules, 1994 does provide for registration beyond a period of 30 days. Three vehicles, as reflected from the writ petition, have already been registered and the State shall certainly be free to recover penalty in accordance with law.

12. By no stretch of imagination, the present writ petition can be treated as Public Interest Litigation. It was a cause of action in respect of three individuals and a Public Interest Litigation has been filed in the matter.

13. Hon'ble the Supreme Court in the case of Dattaram Nathuji Thaware v/s State of Maharashtra & Others reported in 2005 (1) SCC 590 in paragraphs-4 to 16 has held as under:-

"4. When there is material to show that a petition styled as a public interest litigation is nothing but a camouflage to foster personal disputes, said petition is to be thrown out. Before we grapple with the issue involved in the present case, we feel it necessary to consider the issue regarding public interest aspect. Public Interest Litigation which has now come to occupy an important field in the administration of law should not be "publicity interest litigation" or "private interest litigation" or "politics interest litigation" or the latest trend "paise income litigation". The High Court has found that the case at hand belongs to the last category. If not properly regulated and abuse averted, it becomes also a tool in unscrupulous hands to release vendetta and wreck vengeance, as well. There must be real and genuine public interest involved in the litigation and not merely an adventure of knight errant borne out of wishful thinking. It cannot also be invoked by a person or a body of persons to further his or their personal causes or satisfy his or their personal grudge and enmity. Courts of justice should not be allowed to be polluted by unscrupulous litigants by resorting to the extraordinary jurisdiction. A person acting bona fide and having sufficient interest in the proceeding of public interest litigation will alone have a locus standi and can approach the Court to wipe out violation of fundamental rights and genuine infraction of statutory provisions, but not for personal gain or private profit or political motive or any oblique consideration. These aspects were highlighted by

this Court in *The Janta Dal v. H.S. Chowdhary* (1992 (4) SCC 305) and *Kazi Lhendup Dorji vs. Central Bureau of Investigation*, (1994 Supp (2) SCC 116). A writ petitioner who comes to the Court for relief in public interest must come not only with clean hands like any other writ petitioner but also with a clean heart, clean mind and clean objective. (See *Ramjas Foundation vs. Union of India*, (AIR 1993 SC 852) and *K.R. Srinivas v. R.M. Premchand*, (1994 (6) SCC 620).

5. It is necessary to take note of the meaning of expression 'public interest litigation'. In *Stroud's Judicial Dictionary*, Volume 4 (IV Edition), 'Public Interest' is defined thus:

"Public Interest (1) a matter of public or general interest does not mean that which is interesting as gratifying curiosity or a love of information or amusement but that in which a class of the community have a pecuniary interest, or some interest by which their legal rights or liabilities are affected."

6. In *Black's Law Dictionary* (Sixth Edition), "public interest" is defined as follows:

"Public Interest something in which the public, or some interest by which their legal rights or liabilities are affected. It does not mean anything the particular localities, which may be affected by the matters in question. Interest shared by national government...."

7. In *Janata Dal* case (supra) this Court considered the scope of public interest litigation. In para 52 of the said judgment, after considering what is public interest, has laid down as follows:

"The expression 'litigation' means a legal action including all proceedings therein initiated in a Court of law for the enforcement of right or seeking a remedy. Therefore, lexically the expression "PIL" means the legal action initiated in a Court of law for the enforcement of public interest or general interest in which the public or a class of the community have pecuniary interest or some interest by which their legal rights or liabilities are affected."

8. In paras 60, 61 and 62 of the said judgment, it was pointed out as follows:

"Be that as it may, it is needless to emphasis that the requirement of locus standi of a party to a litigation is mandatory, because the legal capacity of the party to any litigation whether in private or public action in relation to any specific remedy sought for has to be primarily ascertained at the threshold."

9. In para 98 of the said judgment, it has further been pointed out as follows:

"While this Court has laid down a chain of notable decisions with all emphasis at their command about the importance and significance of this newly developed doctrine of PIL, it has also hastened to sound a red alert and a note of severe warning that Courts should not allow its process to be abused by a mere busy body or a meddlesome interloper or wayfarer or officious intervener without any interest or concern except for personal gain or private profit or other oblique consideration."

10. In subsequent paras of the said judgment, it was observed as follows:

"It is thus clear that only a person acting bona fide and having sufficient interest in the proceeding of PIL will alone have as locus standi and can approach the Court to wipe out the tears of the poor and needy, suffering from violation of their fundamental rights, but not a person for personal gain or private profit or political motive or any oblique consideration. Similarly a vexatious petition under the colour of PIL, brought before the Court for vindicating any personal grievance, deserves rejection at the threshold".

11. It is depressing to note that on account of such trumpery proceedings initiated before the Courts, innumerable days are wasted, which time otherwise could have been spent for the disposal of cases of the genuine litigants. Though we spare no efforts in fostering and developing the laudable concept of PIL and extending our long arm of sympathy to the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed and the needy whose fundamental rights are infringed and violated and whose grievances go unnoticed, un-represented and unheard; yet we cannot avoid but express our opinion that while genuine litigants with legitimate grievances relating to civil matters involving properties worth hundreds of millions of rupees and criminal cases in which persons sentenced to death facing gallows under untold agony and persons sentenced to life imprisonment and kept in incarceration for long years, persons suffering from undue delay in service matters - government or private, persons awaiting the disposal of cases wherein huge amounts of public revenue or unauthorized collection of tax amounts are locked up, detenu expecting their release from the detention orders etc. etc. are all standing in a long serpentine queue for years with the fond hope of getting into the Courts and having their grievances redressed, the busybodies, meddlesome interlopers, wayfarers or officious interveners having absolutely no public interest except for personal gain or private profit either of themselves or as a proxy of others or for any other extraneous motivation or for glare of publicity break the queue muffing their faces by wearing the mask of public interest litigation and get into the Courts by filing vexatious and frivolous petitions and thus criminally waste the valuable time of the Courts and as a result of which the queue standing outside the doors of the Courts never moves, which piquant situation creates frustration in the minds of the genuine litigants and resultantly they loose faith in the administration of our judicial system.

12. Public interest litigation is a weapon which has to be used with great care and circumspection and the judiciary has to be extremely careful to see that behind the beautiful veil of public interest an ugly private malice, vested interest and/or publicity seeking is not lurking. It is to be used as an effective weapon in the armory of law for delivering social justice to the citizens. The attractive brand name of public interest litigation should not be used for suspicious products of mischief. It should be aimed at redressal of genuine public wrong or public injury and not publicity oriented or founded on personal vendetta. As indicated above, Court must be careful to see that a body of persons or member of public, who

approaches the court is acting bona fide and not for personal gain or private motive or political motivation or other oblique considerations. The Court must not allow its process to be abused for oblique considerations by masked phantoms who monitor at times from behind. Some persons with vested interest indulge in the pastime of meddling with judicial process either by force of habit or from improper motives, and try to bargain for a good deal as well to enrich themselves. Often they are actuated by a desire to win notoriety or cheap popularity. The petitions of such busy bodies deserve to be thrown out by rejection at the threshold, and in appropriate cases with exemplary costs.

13. The Council for Public Interest Law set up by the Ford Foundation in USA defined the "public interest litigation" in its report of Public Interest Law, USA, 1976 as follows:

"Public Interest Law is the name that has recently been given to efforts provide legal representation to previously unrepresented groups and interests. Such efforts have been undertaken in the recognition that ordinary market place for legal services fails to provide such services to significant segments of the population and to significant interests. Such groups and interests include the proper environmentalists, consumers, racial and ethnic minorities and others."

14. The Court has to be satisfied about (a) the credentials of the applicant; (b) the prima facie correctness or nature of information given by him; (c) the information being not vague and indefinite. The information should show gravity and seriousness involved. Court has to strike balance between two conflicting interests; (i) nobody should be allowed to indulge in wild and reckless allegations besmirching the character of others; and (ii) avoidance of public mischief and to avoid mischievous petitions seeking to assail, for oblique motives, justifiable executive actions. In such case, however, the Court cannot afford to be liberal. It has to be extremely careful to see that under the guise of redressing a public grievance, it does not encroach upon the sphere reserved by the Constitution to the Executive and the Legislature. The Court has to act ruthlessly while dealing with imposters and busybodies or meddlesome interlopers impersonating as public-spirited holy men. They masquerade as crusaders of justice. They pretend to act in the name of Pro Bono Publico, though they have no interest of the public or even of their own to protect.

15. Courts must do justice by promotion of good faith, and prevent law from crafty invasions. Courts must maintain the social balance by interfering where necessary for the sake of justice and refuse to interfere where it is against the social interest and public good. (See *State of Maharashtra vs. Prabhu*, (1994 (2) SCC 481), and *Andhra Pradesh State Financial Corporation vs. M/s GAR Re-Rolling Mills and Anr.*, (AIR 1994 SC 2151). No litigant has a right to unlimited draught on the Court time and public money in order to get his affairs settled in the manner as he wishes. Easy access to justice should not be misused as a licence to file misconceived and frivolous petitions. (See *Dr. B.K. Subbarao vs. Mr. K. Parasaran*, (1996 (7) JT 265). Today people rush to Courts to file cases in

profusion under this attractive name of public interest. They must inspire confidence in Courts and among the public.

16. As noted supra, a time has come to weed out the petitions, which though titled as public interest litigations are in essence something else. It is shocking to note that Courts are flooded with large number of so called public interest litigations where even a minuscule percentage can legitimately be called as public interest litigations. Though the parameters of public interest litigation have been indicated by this Court in large number of cases, yet unmindful of the real intentions and objectives, Courts are entertaining such petitions and wasting valuable judicial time which, as noted above, could be otherwise utilized for disposal of genuine cases. Though in *Dr. Duryodhan Sahu and Ors. v. Jitendra Kumar Mishra and Ors.* (AIR 1999 SC 114), this Court held that in service matters PILs should not be entertained, the inflow of so-called PILs involving service matters continues unabated in the Courts and strangely are entertained. The least the High Courts could do is to throw them out on the basis of the said decision. The other interesting aspect is that in the PILs, official documents are being annexed without even indicating as to how the petitioner came to possess them. In one case, it was noticed that an interesting answer was given as to its possession. It was stated that a packet was lying on the road and when out of curiosity the petitioner opened it, he found copies of the official documents. Apart from the sinister manner, if any, of getting such copies, the real brain or force behind such cases would get exposed to find out the truth and motive behind the petition. Whenever such frivolous pleas, as noted, are taken to explain possession, the Court should do well not only to dismiss the petitions but also to impose exemplary costs. It would be desirable for the Courts to filter out the frivolous petitions and dismiss them with costs as afore-stated so that the message goes in the right direction that petitions filed with oblique motive do not have the approval of the Courts.

17. In *S.P. Gupta v. Union of India* (1981 Supp. SCC 87) it was emphatically pointed out that the relaxation of the rule of locus standi in the field of PIL does not give any right to a busybody or meddlesome interloper to approach the Court under the guise of a public interest litigant. He has also left the following note of caution: (SCC p.219, para 24)

"But we must be careful to see that the member of the public, who approaches the court in cases of this kind, is acting bona fide and not for personal gain or private profit or political motivation or other oblique consideration. The court must not allow its process to be abused by politicians and others to delay legitimate administrative action or to gain a political objective."

18. In *State of H.P. vs. A Parent of a Student of Medical College, Simla and Ors.* (1985 (3) SCC 169), it has been said that public interest litigation is a weapon which has to be used with great care and circumspection.

19. These aspects have been highlighted in *Ashok Kumar Pandey v. State of West*

Bengal (2004 (3) SCC 349) and Dr. B. Singh v. Union of India & Ors. (2004 (3) SCC 363).

20. It is disturbing feature which needs immediate remedial measure by the Bar Councils and the Bar Association to see that the process of law is not abused and polluted by its member. It is high time that the Bar Councils and the Bar Associations ensure that no member of the Bar becomes party as petitioner or in aiding and/or abetting files frivolous petitions carrying the attractive brand name of "Public Interest Litigation". That will be keeping in line with the high traditions of the Bar. No one should be permitted to bring disgrace to the noble profession. We would have imposed exemplary cost in this regard but taking note of the fact that the High Court had already imposed costs of Rs.25,000/-, we do not propose to impose any further cost.

21. Let copy of this judgment be sent to Bar Council of India and the Supreme Court Bar Association by the Registry for necessary action.

22. The petition deserves to be dismissed, which we direct."

13. In light of the aforesaid judgment delivered by Hon'ble the Supreme Court, the petitioner, as was spousing the cause of three individuals, who after purchasing the vehicles, kept quite for almost three to four years and after three to four years submitted the application for registration and as their vehicles were not being registered, as stated in the writ petition, have camouflaged their personal interest into public interest and precious time of the Court was wasted in issuing the notice, in calling the reply and putting entire state mechanism into motion. Such type of frivolous Public Interest Litigation not only deserves to be dismissed, but deserves to be dismissed with costs, and therefore, we quantify the cost at Rs.25,000/- and the same be deposited in the Army Welfare Fund within thirty days and if the amount is not deposited in the Army Welfare Fund within thirty days, the same be recovered from the petitioner by the Collector, Ujjain as arrears of land revenue and be transmitted to the Army Welfare Fund.

With the aforesaid, the present writ petition stands allowed.

Certified copy, as per rules.