

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION
CIVIL APPEAL Nos.7313-7314 OF 2019

**ANAND GRAM SOCIETY HANSENS DISEASE (LEPROSY)
REHABILITATION CENTRE**

... APPELLANT

Versus

DY. CONSERVATOR OF FOREST, PUNE & ORS.

... RESPONDENTS

O R D E R

1. Anand Gram Society Hansens Disease (Leprosy) Rehabilitation Centre is in appeal before us challenging judgment dated 26.05.2017 and order dated 23.01.2018, passed by the National Green Tribunal, Western Zone, Pune (for short, 'the Tribunal') in Application No. 115/2015 and OA No. 120/2017.

2. It may be mentioned that the first order dated 26.05.2017 was passed by the Tribunal in Application No. 115/2015 (WZ). The said order was passed at the instance of a resident of Pune, who claimed forest land was being destroyed due to encroachments. The application apparently referred to some survey numbers of different villages where encroachments like (i) construction of road; (ii) construction by Pricast India Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd.; (iii) road made on the forest land; (iv) road for goods transportation and houses; and (v) stone mines for construction of RCC used for building houses were existing.

3. Regardless of the categorical stand taken by some of the respondents that they have nothing to do with the forest land and

have not encroached upon it in any manner, the Tribunal, without assigning any reason, and without any discussion on the issues jumped to a conclusion and issued a sweeping direction to the (i) Principal Chief Secretary (Forest) (ii) Principal Chief Conservator (Forest), (iii) Chief Conservator of Forest, and (iv) Collector, Pune "to take steps to remove all the said encroachments within three weeks in accordance with law and reconstitute the environment". The other respondents were directed to extend full cooperation.

4. Thereafter, it seems that some proceedings akin to contempt proceedings, through O.A. No. 120/2017, were initiated and when the matter was taken up for hearing on 23.01.2018, one Dy. Conservator of Forest was present, who did not have complete instructions on facts, for which the case was passed over. Subsequently, a direction was issued to the Chief Conservator of Forest to conduct spot inspection/survey of the area along with District Collector and submit a report about the factual aspects of the structures built on the land in question. The Director General of Police was directed to provide police assistance to remove the structures etc.

5. The appellant is an NGO, which runs a Public Charitable Trust at Dudulgaon, Pune, Maharashtra and has been working for the welfare and rehabilitation of leprosy patients since 1965. The total area acquired by the appellant-Society is three acres with a 6 meter wide access road of 500 meters length. Since the appellant-Society has also been directed to remove the structures where leprosy patients are being treated for decades, the instant appeals were filed, in which we directed to maintain *status quo* at the

site, vide order dated 13.09.2019.

6. We have heard learned counsel for the parties and carefully perused the material placed on record.

7. We are constrained to highlight that the Tribunal has failed to observe the principles of natural justice and has passed sweeping directions without determining as to whether the subject area is a forest land and if so, whether it has been duly notified under the relevant statutes. Similarly, no opportunity was granted to the bonafide users of the site like the appellant-Society to establish as to whether the Leprosy Cure Centre was being run with or without prior permission of the concerned authorities.

8. The issue as to whether the strict parameters are liable to be relaxed in a case of extraordinary circumstances has not been considered by the Tribunal. What is the purpose of the Charitable Trust, whether it is being run for the welfare of the leprosy patients and providing them timely medical treatment, and whether the Leprosy Cure Centre also deserves to be uprooted from the site treating like any commercial venture, are several factors which the Tribunal ought to have kept in mind before issuing the omnibus directions.

9. The other danger which *quasi* Tribunals like, the National Green Tribunal, must keep in mind is the bonafides and locus of the person who approaches it. In a given case, if the applicant has not come to the Tribunal with clean hands and the entire object of his application is to grind an axe and to settle scores, it is the bounden duty of the Tribunal to accord a reasonable opportunity of being heard to the parties likely to be affected and give an

opportunity to enable them to demonstrate that the concerned applicant has not approached the Tribunal with bonafide intention.

10. In the case in hand, the applicant appears to have approached the Tribunal on one fine morning without even disclosing that the structure by the Society came to be raised way back in the year 1960. Unfortunately, the officers of the Forest Department also did not disclose the correct facts leading to immense hardship to the appellant-Society.

11. For the reasons aforesaid, we allow these appeals; set aside the impugned order of the Tribunal *qua* the appellant and or other similarly affected persons except that the Tribunal shall be at liberty to proceed against those who have encroached upon the forest land for commercial gains.

12. The applicant shall be at liberty to pursue his remedy against all such entities in accordance with law.

13. It is further directed that no order adverse to a party shall be passed without giving a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

14. As a result, the pending interlocutory applications also stand disposed of.

.....J.
(SURYA KANT)

.....J.
(UJJAL BHUYAN)

NEW DELHI;
DECEMBER 17, 2024.

ITEM NO.7

COURT NO.3

SECTION XVII

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
R E C O R D O F P R O C E E D I N G S

Civil Appeal No(s).7313-7314/2019

ANAND GRAM SOCIETY HANSENS DISEASE (LEPROSY)
REHABILITATION CENTRE

Appellant(s)

VERSUS

DY. CONSERVATOR OF FOREST, PUNE & ORS.

Respondent(s)

IA No. 228300/2023 - APPLICATION UNDER ORDER V RULE 20 CPC FOR
EFFECTING SERVICE THROUGH PUBLICATION

IA No. 133812/2019 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING C/C OF THE IMPUGNED
JUDGMENT

IA No. 133813/2019 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING O.T.

IA No. 133815/2019 - PERMISSION TO FILE ADDITIONAL
DOCUMENTS/FACTS/ANNEXURES

IA No. 133814/2019 - STAY APPLICATION)

Date : 17-12-2024 These matters were called on for hearing today.

CORAM :

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SURYA KANT
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE UJJAL BHUYAN

For Appellant(s) Mr. Sudhanshu S Chaudhari, Sr. Adv.
Mr. Mahesh Prakash Shinde, Adv.
Mr. Vatsalya Vigya, AOR
Ms. Pranjal Chapalgaonkar, Adv.
Ms. Gautami Yadav, Adv.

For Respondent(s) Mr. Adarsh Dubey, Adv.
Mr. Siddharth Dharmadhikari, Adv.
Mr. Aaditya Aniruddha Pande, AOR

Mr. Shivaji M. Jadhav, AOR
Mr. Brij Kishor Sah, Adv.
Mr. Adarsh Kumar Pandey, Adv.
Mr. Vignesh Singh, Adv.
Mr. Aditya S. Jadhav, Adv.
Mr. Ankit Sahu, Adv.
Mr. Amit Kumar Gupta, Adv.

Mr. Pai Amit, AOR
Ms. Pankhuri Bhardwaj, Adv.
Mr. Kushal Dube, Adv.

UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following

O R D E R

The appeals are allowed in terms of the signed order.

As a result, the pending interlocutory applications also stand disposed of.

(SATISH KUMAR YADAV)
ADDITIONAL REGISTRAR

(PREETHI T.C.)
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR

(Signed order is placed on the file)