

Supreme Court of India

The Land Acquisition Officer ... vs Belekal Krishna Bhat on 7 August, 1996

Equivalent citations: 1996 SCALE (6)96

Author: K Ramaswamy

Bench: Ramaswamy, K.

PETITIONER:

THE LAND ACQUISITION OFFICER AND ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, MANG

Vs.

RESPONDENT:

BELEKAL KRISHNA BHAT

DATE OF JUDGMENT: 07/08/1996

BENCH:

RAMASWAMY, K.

BENCH:

RAMASWAMY, K.

G.B. PATTANAIAK (J)

CITATION:

1996 SCALE (6)96

ACT:

HEADNOTE:

JUDGMENT:

THE 7TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1996 Present:

Hon'ble Mr. Justice K. Ramaswamy Hon'ble Mr. Justice G.B. Pattanaik Mr. M. Veerappa, Advocate for the appellants. Mr. S.N. Bhat, Advocate for the respondent.

O R D E R The following order of the Court was delivered: The Land Acquisition Officer & Assistant Commissioner, Mangalore V.

Belekal Krishna Bhat O R D E R A Notification under Section 4(1) of the Land Acquisition Act 1 of 1894 (for short, the 'Act') was published in the State Gazette on September 17, 1970 acquiring 11 cents of land in question for establishing a post office. The Land Acquisition Officer determined the compensation at Rs.2,50,000/- per acre. On reference, the Civil Judge by his award and decree dated May 28, 1977 enhanced the compensation to Rs.4,50,000/- per acre. On further appeal under Section 54 of the Act, the High Court by the impugned judgment dated May 26, 1982 further

enhanced the amount to Rs.6,00,000/- per acre. Thus this appeal by special leave.

It is not in dispute that the respondent relied upon the sale deed (Exhibit P-9) dated August 12, 1970 executed by P.W.2 under which 71/12 cents were sold at the rate of Rs.48,000/- , which worked out to the rate of Rs.6 lakhs per acre. Another document relied on was Exhibit P-7, lease deed dated July 10, 1961 with provision renewal for a further period of ten years. The renewal from time to time first of which would be in July 19, 1971 with the enhanced lease amount which would work out on applying suitable multiplier, to the rate of Rs.5,280/- per year. With the said multiplier, the compensation would work out to Rs.4,50,000/- per acre.

The question is: whether the High Court was right in placing reliance on Exhibit P-9, sale deed? It was suggested to the witness in the cross-examination that he was aware of the acquisition and having had knowledge he got the sale used executed to inflate the market value. He admitted that he was aware of the proposed acquisition and that thereafter the sale deed came to be executed. The High Court has interpreted this admission as the 'not' was not omitted in recording the evidence and that, therefore, 'not' was to be added. Adding the word 'not', the High Court held that he denied the knowledge of acquisition. The Civil Judge has rightly considered this aspect of the matter and recorded the finding that sale under Exhibit P-9 is not a bona fide transaction and was pressed into serve in inflate the market value. The reasoning of the Civil Judge is correct. The High Court read something which was not recorded. The witness had admitted that he was aware of impending acquisition and got the sale deed executed; yet the High Court held that the Civil Judge would not have omitted the word 'not'. If really the witness had denied and yet the Judges wanted to, then the witness would have objected at the time of recording or signing the evidence of the witness which was not done. The counsel who appeared before the civil Court has also not contested it to be a mistake. Therefore, it was not open to the learned Judges of the High Court to read something which would defuse the effect of the admission made by the witness. Even otherwise, it would be common knowledge that the acquisition would take long time. It would be known to the people in the locality, when documents proximate to the time of acquisition were set up for inflating the compensation. The Court has to look into the attending circumstances whether documents are brought into existence with the intention to inflate the market value or are true and genuine documents; consideration is a device to know whether the vendor and the vendee are genuine parties or privy to pass off sale process. The Civil Judge has rightly gone into all these questions and disbelieved Exhibit P-9 as genuine one. The Division Bench was, therefore, not at all justified in reversing that finding of the civil Judge on strange reasoning and came to its own conclusion. It is settled law that civil Judge had advantage to observe the demeanour of the witness in the witness box and he formed his own opinion about the witness which the appellate Court did not have.

The appeal is accordingly allowed. The judgment and decree of the High Court is set aside and that of the reference Court, civil Judge stands restored, but, in the circumstances, without costs.