

2025 LiveLaw (SC) 452

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**

SURYA KANT; J., NONGMEIKAPAM KOTISWAR SINGH; J.

Writ Petition(s)(Civil) No(s). 1428/2023; 02-04-2025

MUNDONA RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION *versus* UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

Constitution of India - Article 21 and 243G - Public Interest Litigation - Public Libraries in Villages - The Supreme Court refused to direct State Governments to establish public libraries in rural areas, emphasizing that pressing issues like clean water, sanitation, health, and education under Article 21 (Right to Life) take precedence over library initiatives. The Court highlighted the lack of comprehensive data on rural conditions and financial constraints, noting that resource allocation is a policy matter for governments. While acknowledging the value of libraries in promoting knowledge and democratic values, the Court encouraged States to explore innovative solutions, such as e-libraries and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds, to address the issue within their means. The petition was disposed of with a call for States to take effective steps to promote library facilities in rural areas. (Paras 3 - 6)

For Petitioner(s): Mr. Ashok Kumar Panda, Sr. Adv., Ms. Swati Jindal, AOR Mr. Laxmi Kant Gaur, Adv., Ms. Vartika Sharma, Adv.,

For Respondent(s): Mr. Vikramjit Banerjee, A.S.G., Mr. Anirudh Bhat, Adv., Mr. Yashraj Singh Bundela, Adv., Mr. Shubhandu Anand, Adv., Dr. N. Visakamurthy, AOR, Mr. Mahfooz Ahsan Nazki, AOR, Mr. Abhimanyu Tewari, AOR Ms. Eliza Barr, Adv., Mr. Ankit Roy, AOR Ms. Nimisha Menon, Adv., Ms. Divyangi Gupta, Adv., Mr. Samir Ali Khan, AOR Mr. Pranjal Sharma, Adv., Mr. Anil Kumar Verma, Adv., Mr. Vikrant Singh Bais, D.A.G., Mr. Vinayak Sharma, Standing Counsel, Adv., Mr. Ravinder Kumar Yadav, AOR, Ms. Deepanwita Priyanka, AOR Mr. Deepak Singh, Adv., Mr. Lokesh Sinhal, Sr. A.A.G., Mr. Akshay Amritanshu, AOR Mr. Nikunj Gupta, Adv., Ms. Pragya Upadhyay, Adv., Ms. Drishti Saraf, Adv., Ms. Aakanksha, Adv., Ms. Ishika Gupta, Adv., Mr. Sarthak Arya, Adv., Mr. V. N. Raghupathy, AOR Mr. Raghavendra M. Kulkarni, Adv., Mr. M. Bangaraswamy, Adv., Mr. Venkata Raghu Mannepalli, Adv., Mr. Md. Apzal Ansari, Adv., Ms. Rucha Pande, Adv., Mr. Siddharth Dharmadhikari, Adv., Mr. Aaditya Aniruddha Pande, AOR, Mr. Rohit Amit Sthalekar, AOR, Mr. Sameer Abhyankar, AOR Mr. Aakash Thakur, Adv., Mr. Anando Mukherjee, AOR Mr. Shwetank Singh, Adv., Mr. Mukesh Kumar Maroria, AOR, Mr. K. M. Nataraj Ld. Asg, A.S.G., Mr. Vinayak Sharma, Adv., Mr. Harish Pandey, Adv., Mr. Kanu Agrawal, Adv., Mr. Rajesh Singh Chauhan, Adv., Ms. Indira Bhakar, Adv., Mr. Varun Chugh, Adv., Mr. Shashwat Parihar, Adv., Mr. Piyush Beriwal, Adv., Mr. Mukesh K Verma, Adv., Mr. Krishna Kant Dubey, Adv., Mr. Shreekant Neelappa Terdal, AOR, Mr. Pukhrambam Ramesh Kumar, Adv., Mr. Karun Sharma, Adv., Ms. Rajkumari Divyasana, Adv.

ORDER

1. The petitioner Foundation has filed the instant Writ Petition purportedly in public interest seeking a direction to the Union of India and the State Governments for setting up of libraries by the Gram Panchayats in rural areas.
2. We have heard learned senior counsel for the petitioner as also some of the State counsels, who have entered appearance and filed their counter affidavits.
3. There can be no doubt that the Gram Panchayats, as the institutions of democracy at grass-root level and the first instrument of constitutional governance envisioned under Article 243G of the Constitution of India, is responsible for implementation of the schemes for economic development and social justice for the people living in their respective rural areas. Such affirmative actions and welfare schemes, however, largely depend upon the financial assistance received from the States or their agencies sanctioned from time to time.

4. The setting up of a village library is undoubtedly a laudable object. Such library would help in reaching out to the young children and the posterity to learn about our history, culture, literature, geography, the constitutional values, rights and responsibilities of the citizenry.

5. We, however, cannot be oblivious of the fact that adequate facilities for health, education, drinking water, hygienic conditions and other basic amenities required in the rural areas, if not more, are equally important. The prioritization of such basic amenities, in our considered opinion, is a matter of policy which can be left to the wisdom of the policymakers. It would not be prudent for a Court, in the absence of relevant data, facts and details of the financial conditions and prior commitments of a

State or its agencies, to determine as to which of these facilities should be prioritised overlooking the others.

6. We have already stated that establishment of libraries in villages across India will aid towards infusing democratic values, constitutional culture and access to information to those living in inaccessible areas. We, therefore, deem it appropriate to dispose of this petition by impressing upon the State Governments to look into this aspect of the matter and take necessary steps within the limits of their resources, and address the issue of lack of libraries in villages.

7. We hope and trust that some effective measures, especially towards promotion of e-libraries would be taken for which even CSR fundings can be explored by the States. With these directions and observations, the writ petition stands disposed of.

8. Pending application(s), if any, shall stand disposed of.

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