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BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED : 29.07.2015

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE Mr.JUSTICE S.VAIDYANATHAN

W.P.(MD)No.447 of 2015

and

M.P.(MD)No.1 of 2015

V.Gandhimathi

... Petitioner

Vs.

1.The Director of Social Welfare,
No.58, Arunachalam Street,
Chintadripet, Chennai-2.

2.The Commissioner of Social Welfare,
Tirunelveli District, Tirunelveli.

... Respondents

PRAYER: Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, to issue a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records relating to the impugned order of suspension made in Proc.No.32283/Admn.5-1/2013, dated 27.08.2013 on the file of the 1st respondent and to quash the same and consequently, direct the 1st respondent to reinstate the petitioner into service.

For Petitioner : Mr.M.Thirunavukkarasu

For Respondents : Mr.R.Anandaraj, G.A.

ORDER

The Writ petition has been filed for issuance of a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the records relating to the impugned order of suspension passed in Proc.No.32283/Admn.5-1/2013, dated 27.08.2013 by the 1st respondent, quash the same and consequently, direct the 1st respondent to reinstate the petitioner into service.

2.The case of the petitioner is that when the petitioner was serving as an Industrial Cooperative Officer / Special Officer at Valliyoor, the respondents have initiated a surcharge proceedings against the petitioner and one M.Amali, who was working as a Store Keeper / Clerk, under Section 81 of the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Societies Act for the reason that a sort fault has been occurred to the tune of Rs.79,01,500/-. Based on the complaint of the 2nd respondent, a criminal case has also been filed in Crime No.397 of 2013 under Sections 468, 471 and 408 of IPC. Challenging the same, the petitioner has filed a Criminal Original Petition in CrI.O.P.(MD)No.20360 of 2013 to quash the case in Crime No.397 of 2013. This Court by an order dated 02.07.2014 has quashed the FIR registered against the petitioner and discharged from the criminal case. In this regard, the petitioner has sent a detailed representations on 07.07.2014 and 25.08.2014. However, the respondents have refused to revoke the order



of suspension, stating that the said M.Amali is absconding and without getting explanation from her, the respondents are not in a position to reinstate the petitioner in service. Challenging the same, the present Writ petition has been filed.

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3. Heard the learned counsel appearing for the petitioner as well as the learned Government Advocate appearing for the respondents.

4. This Court is not inclined to interfere with the order of suspension. The Apex Court in the case of **Union of India and another vs. Ashok Kumar Aggarwal**, reported in **2013 (14) Scale 323** has relied on a number decisions and considered the issue relating to the order of suspension. The relevant paragraphs of the judgment (supra) are extracted hereunder:

"7. During suspension, relationship of master and servant continues between the employer and the employee. However, the employee is forbidden to perform his official duties. Thus, suspension order does not put an end to the service. Suspension means the action of debarring for the time being from a function or privilege or temporary deprivation of working in the office. In certain cases, suspension may cause stigma even after exoneration in the departmental proceedings or acquittal by the Criminal Court, but it cannot be treated as a punishment even by any stretch of imagination in strict legal sense. (Vide: **O.P. Gupta v. Union of India and Ors.** [MANU/SC/0670/1987](#): AIR 1987 SC 2257; and **Capt. M. Paul Anthony v. Bharat Gold Mines Ltd. and Anr.** [MANU/SC/0225/1999](#) : AIR 1999 SC 1416).

8. In **State of Orissa v. Bimal Kumar Mohanty** [MANU/SC/0475/1994](#) : AIR 1994 SC 2296, this Court observed as under:

"... the order of suspension would be passed taking into consideration the **gravity** of the misconduct sought to be inquired into or investigated and the **nature of evidence** placed before the appointing authority and **on application of the mind by the disciplinary authority**. Appointing authority or disciplinary authority should consider..... and decide whether it is expedient to keep an employee under suspension pending aforesaid action. It would not be as an administrative routine or an automatic order to suspend an employee. It should be on consideration of the gravity of the alleged misconduct or the nature of the allegations imputed to the delinquent employee. The Court or the Tribunal must consider each case on its own facts and no general law should be laid down in that behalf. In other words, it is to refrain him to avail further opportunity to perpetuate the alleged misconduct or to remove the impression among the members of service that dereliction of duty will pay fruits and the offending employee may get away even pending inquiry without any impediment or to provide an opportunity to the delinquent officer to scuttle the inquiry or investigation to win over the other witnesses or the delinquent having had an opportunity in office to impede the progress of the investigation or inquiry etc. It would be another thing if the action is actuated by **mala fide, arbitrarily or for ulterior purpose**. The suspension must be a step in aid to the ultimate result of the investigation or inquiry. The Authority also should keep in mind **public interest of the impact of the delinquent's continuation in office while facing departmental inquiry or a trial of a criminal charge**. (Emphasis added)



(See also: **R.P. Kapur v. Union of India and Anr.** [MANU/SC/0275/1963](#) : AIR 1964 SC 787; and **Balvantrai Ratilal Patel v. State of Maharashtra** [MANU/SC/0321/1967](#) : AIR 1968 SC 800)."

9. The power of suspension should not be exercised in an arbitrary manner and without any reasonable ground or as vindictive misuse of power. Suspension should be made only in a case where there is a strong *prima facie* case against the delinquent employee and the allegations involving moral turpitude, grave misconduct or indiscipline or refusal to carry out the orders of superior authority are there, or there is a strong *prima facie* case against him, if proved, would ordinarily result in reduction in rank, removal or dismissal from service. The authority should also take into account all the available material as to whether in a given case, it is advisable to allow the delinquent to continue to perform his duties in the office or his retention in office is likely to hamper or frustrate the inquiry.

10. In view of the above, the law on the issue can be summarised to the effect that suspension order can be passed by the competent authority considering the **gravity of the alleged misconduct** i.e. serious act of omission or commission and the **nature of evidence** available. It cannot be actuated by **mala fide, arbitrariness, or for ulterior purpose**. Effect on public interest due to the employee's continuation in office is also a relevant and determining factor. The facts of each case have to be taken into consideration as no formula of universal application can be laid down in this regard. However, suspension order should be passed only where there is a strong *prima facie* case against the delinquent, and if the charges stand proved, would ordinarily warrant imposition of major punishment i.e. removal or dismissal from service, or reduction in rank etc.

11. In **Jayrajibhai Jayantibhai Patel v. Anilbhai Nathubhai Patel and Ors.** [MANU/SC/4080/2006](#): (2006) 8 SCC 200, this Court explained:

"18. Having regard to it all, it is manifest that the power of judicial review may not be exercised unless the administrative decision is illogical or suffers from procedural impropriety or it shocks the conscience of the court in the sense that it is in defiance of logic or moral standards but no standardised formula, universally applicable to all cases, can be evolved. Each case has to be considered on its own facts, depending upon the authority that exercises the power, the source, the nature or scope of power and the indelible effects it generates in the operation of law or affects the individual or society. Though judicial restraint, albeit self-recognised, is the order of the day, yet an administrative decision or action which is based on wholly irrelevant considerations or material; or excludes from consideration the relevant material; or it is so absurd that no reasonable person could have arrived at it on the given material may be struck down. In other words, when a court is satisfied that there is an abuse or misuse of power, and its jurisdiction is invoked, it is incumbent on the court to intervene. It is nevertheless, trite that the scope of judicial review is limited to the deficiency in the decision-making process and not the decision."

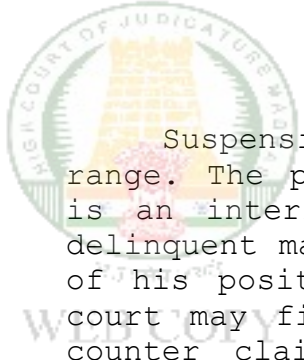
12. Long period of suspension does not make the order of suspension



invalid. However, in **State of H.P. v. B.C. Thakur** (1994) SCC (L and S) 835, this Court held that where for any reason it is not possible to proceed with the domestic enquiry the delinquent may not be kept under suspension.

13. There cannot be any doubt that the Rules 1965 are a self contained code and the order of suspension can be examined in the light of the statutory provisions to determine as to whether the suspension order was justified. Undoubtedly, the delinquent cannot be considered to be any better off after the charge sheet has been filed against him in the court on conclusion of the investigation than his position during the investigation of the case itself. (Vide: **Union of India and Ors. v. Udai Narain** [MANU/SC/1061/1998](#) : (1998) 5 SCC 535).

14. The scope of interference by the Court with the order of suspension has been examined by the Court in a large number of cases, particularly in **State of M.P. v. Sardul Singh** [MANU/SC/0510/1969](#) : (1970) 1 SCC 108; **P.V. Srinivasa Sastry v. Comptroller & Auditor General of India** [MANU/SC/0207/1993](#) : (1993) 1 SCC 419; **Director General, ESI and Anr. v. T. Abdul Razak** [MANU/SC/0585/1996](#) : AIR 1996 SC 2292; **Kusheshwar Dubey v. Bharat Cooking Coal Ltd. and Ors.** [MANU/SC/0246/1988](#) : AIR 1988 SC 2118; **Delhi Cloth General Mills v. Kushan Bhan** [MANU/SC/0228/1960](#) : AIR 1960 SC 806; **U.P. Rajya krishi Utpadan Mandi Parishad and Ors. v. Sanjeev Rajan** [MANU/SC/0844/1993](#) : (1993) Supp. (3) SCC 483; **State of Rajasthan v. B.K. Meena and Ors.** [MANU/SC/0008/1997](#) : (1996) 6 SCC 417; **Secretary to Govt., Prohibition and Excise Department v. L. Srinivasan** [MANU/SC/1108/1996](#) : (1996) 3 SCC 157; and **Allahabad Bank and Anr. v. Deepak Kumar Bhola** [MANU/SC/1126/1997](#) : (1997) 4 SCC 1, wherein it has been observed that even if a criminal trial or enquiry takes a long time, it is **ordinarily** not open to the court to interfere in case of suspension as it is in the exclusive domain of the competent authority who can always review its order of suspension being an inherent power conferred upon them by the provisions of Article 21 of the General Clauses Act, 1897 and while exercising such a power, the authority can consider the case of an employee for revoking the suspension order, if satisfied that the criminal case pending would be concluded after an unusual delay **for no fault of the employee concerned**. Where the charges are baseless, mala fide or vindictive and are framed only to keep the delinquent employee out of job, a case for judicial review is made out. But in a case where no conclusion can be arrived at without examining the entire record in question and in order that the disciplinary proceedings may continue unhindered the court may not interfere. In case the court comes to the conclusion that the authority is not proceeding expeditiously as it ought to have been and it results in prolongation of sufferings for the delinquent employee, the court may issue directions. The court may, in case the authority fails to furnish proper explanation for delay in conclusion of the enquiry, direct to complete the enquiry within a stipulated period. However, mere delay in conclusion of enquiry or trial can not be a ground for quashing the suspension order, if the charges are grave in nature. But, whether the employee should or should not continue in his office during the period of enquiry is a matter to be assessed by the disciplinary authority concerned and ordinarily the court should not interfere with the orders of suspension unless they are passed in mala fide and without there being even a *prima facie* evidence on record connecting the employee with the misconduct in question.



Suspension is a device to keep the delinquent out of the mischief range. The purpose is to complete the proceedings unhindered. Suspension is an interim measure in aid of disciplinary proceedings so that the delinquent may not gain custody or control of papers or take any advantage of his position. More so, at this stage, it is not desirable that the court may find out as which version is true when there are claims and counter claims on factual issues. The court cannot act as if it an appellate forum de hors the powers of judicial review."

5. In view of the above, I find no reason to interfere with the order of suspension. However, it is open to the department to proceed against the petitioner departmentally on day to day basis and the respondents shall also review the suspension order periodically. It is also open to the respondents to issue charge sheet, if so advised and complete the enquiry, if any commenced, as early as possible preferably within a period of 6 months from the date of receipt of a copy of this order. As far as the payment of subsistence allowance is concerned, it shall be considered and paid, if it is payable in terms of the provisions applicable to the respondents.

6. The Writ petition is disposed of accordingly. No costs. Consequently, connected M.P. is closed.

Sd/-
Assistant Registrar

/True Copy/

Sub Assistant Registrar

To

1. The Director of Social Welfare,
No.58, Arunachalam Street,
Chintadripet, Chennai-2.

2. The Commissioner of Social Welfare,
Tirunelveli District, Tirunelveli.

+1cc to M/S. J. Gunaseelan Muthiah, Advocate in SR.No 42821

TS/17.08.2015/5P - 4C

W.P. (MD) No.447 of 2015

29.07.2015