

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 08.12.2017

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE S.M.SUBRAMANIAM

W.P.No.12937 of 2012

and

M.P.No.1 of 2012

1.D.Ruban Chakravarthy

2.S.Balaji

3.K.Kanniamma Devi

4.R.Valarmathi

5.C.Nandakumar

6.B.Vinoth

7.C.Karthikeyan

8.M.Shobha

.... Petitioners

Vs.

1.The Chariman,
Tamil Nadu Electricity Board,
No.800 Anna Salai,
Chennai - 600 002.

2.The Chief Engineer (Personnel),
Tamil Nadu Electricity Board,
No.800 Anna Salai,
Chennai - 600 002.

... Respondents

PRAYER: Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India for issuance of a Writ of Mandamus, to direct the respondents herein to consider the petitioners for appointment to the post of Assistant Engineers (Electrical) and Assistant Engineers (Mechanical) and to direct them to give top priority while appointing Assistant Engineers in the services of the respondent Board.

For Petitioners : Mr.PremKumar

For Respondents : Mrs.R.Varalakshmi

O R D E R

The relief sought for in this writ petition is for a direction to direct the respondents to consider the petitioners for appointment to the post of Assistant Engineers (Electrical) and Assistant Engineers (Mechanical) and to direct them to give top priority while appointing Assistant Engineers in the services of the respondent Board.

2.The learned counsel appearing for the writ petitioners states that the writ petitioners were engaged as Contract Labourers in the category of Assistant Engineers and the petitioners have completed their B.E. course in Electrical Engineering. The petitioners are fully qualified for appointment to the post of Assistant Engineers. However, their initial appointments were on contract basis. The petitioners are serving only as contract employees and their services are not regularized inspite of the long services rendered by them.

3.The learned counsel appearing on behalf of the writ petitioners further states that when the writ petitioners and other similarly placed contract labourers are working in the Board, the respondent Board is now taking steps to recruit persons from outside. Thus, the case of the writ petitioners are to be considered for regularization or permanent absorption.

4.The learned counsel appearing on behalf of the respondents has stated that the writ petitioners were appointed only as contract labourers and their services cannot be regularized in view of the fact that their initial appointment were not made in accordance with the recruitment rules in force. The post of Assistant Engineer is governed by service rules and the recruitment to the post of Assistant Engineer ought to have been undertaken in accordance with the procedures contemplated under the recruitment rules through an open competitive process.

5.The learned counsel appearing for the petitioners brought to the notice of this Court that the respondents have not filed any counter and this court has to place on record that though the writ petition was filed in the year 2012, the respondents failed to respond and file counter affidavit for the past about five years. Thus, the officials who are responsible for not filing the counter affidavit in this writ petition are to be prosecuted under the Discipline and Appeal Rules.

Whenever, the Rule NISI was issued by the High Courts, it is for the respondents to file counter affidavit. The respondents being the State in the case on hand, the officials are bound to submit their counter affidavit within a reasonable period. Now, even after a lapse of about five years, the respondents have not filed counter, which amounts dereliction of public duty on the part of the officials, who are dealing this writ petition and the files.

6.It is further verified from the Court records that the counsel for the respondents filed vakalat in this writ petition on 14.06.2013 itself. Even thereafter, four years lapsed and no counter affidavit has been filed. Thus, this Court has to draw an inference in this regard and such kind of attitude of the officials in not responding to the Court Proceedings are to be deprecated. This apart, there will be a reasonable doubt and there is possibility of collision in between the parties. In this regard, when the High Court issued a notice, then, it is the duty of the officials of the State concerned to respond to the High Court at the earliest possible.

7.In the case on hand, the petitioners have sought for the benefit of regularization on the ground that they are continuing as contract employees. This apart, the learned counsel appearing for the writ petitioners states that their sole grievances is that when the writ petitioners are working as contract labourers, the board should not appoint candidates from open market and the writ petitioners are to be considered at the first instance.

8.Such an argument cannot be accepted in view of the legal principles settled by the Constitutional Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of State of Karnataka Vs. Umadevi reported in 2006 4 SCC page No.1 and the relevant paragraphs are extracted here under:

5. The power of a State as an employer is more limited than that of a private employer inasmuch as it is subjected to constitutional limitations and cannot be exercised arbitrarily. Article 309 of the Constitution gives the Government the power to frame rules for the purpose of laying down the conditions of service and recruitment of persons to be appointed to public services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or any of the States. That Article contemplates the drawing up of a procedure and rules to regulate the recruitment and regulate the service conditions of appointees appointed to public posts. It is well acknowledged that because of this, the entire process of recruitment for services is controlled by detailed procedure which specify the

necessary qualifications, the mode of appointment etc. If rules have been made under Article 309 of the Constitution, then the Government can make appointments only in accordance with the rules. The State is meant to be a model employer. The Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act, 1959 was enacted to ensure equal opportunity for employment seekers. Though this Act may not oblige an employer to employ only those persons who have been sponsored by employment exchanges, it places an obligation on the employer to notify the vacancies that may arise in the various departments and for filling up of those vacancies, based on a procedure. Normally, statutory rules are framed under the authority of law governing employment. It is recognized that no government order, notification or circular can be substituted for the statutory rules framed under the authority of law. This is because, following any other course could be disastrous inasmuch as it will deprive the security of tenure and the right of equality conferred on civil servants under the Constitutional scheme. It may even amount to negating the accepted service jurisprudence. Therefore, when statutory rules are framed under Article 309 of the Constitution which are exhaustive, the only fair means to adopt is to make appointments based on the rules so framed.

10. In addition to the equality clause represented by Article 14 of the Constitution, Article 16 has specifically provided for equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. Buttressing these fundamental rights, Article 309 provides that subject to the provisions of the Constitution, Acts of the legislature may regulate the recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to public services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State. In view of the interpretation placed on Article 12 of the Constitution by this Court, obviously, these principles also govern the instrumentalities that come within the purview of Article 12 of the Constitution. With a view to make the procedure for selection fair, the Constitution by Article 315 has also created a Public Service Commission for the Union and Public Service Commissions for the States. Article 320 deals with the functions of Public Service Commissions and mandates consultation with the Commission on all matters relating to methods of recruitment to civil services and for civil posts and other related matters. As a

part of the affirmative action recognized by Article 16 of the Constitution, Article 335 provides for special consideration in the matter of claims of the members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes for employment. The States have made Acts, Rules or Regulations for implementing the above constitutional guarantees and any recruitment to the service in the State or in the Union is governed by such Acts, Rules and Regulations. The Constitution does not envisage any employment outside this constitutional scheme and without following the requirements set down therein.

12. What is sought to be pitted against this approach, is the so called equity arising out of giving of temporary employment or engagement on daily wages and the continuance of such persons in the engaged work for a certain length of time. Such considerations can have only a limited role to play, when every qualified citizen has a right to apply for appointment, the adoption of the concept of rule of law and the scheme of the Constitution for appointment to posts. It cannot also be forgotten that it is not the role of courts to ignore, encourage or approve appointments made or engagements given outside the constitutional scheme. In effect, orders based on such sentiments or approach would result in perpetuating illegalities and in the jettisoning of the scheme of public employment adopted by us while adopting the Constitution. The approving of such acts also results in depriving many of their opportunity to compete for public employment. We have, therefore, to consider the question objectively and based on the constitutional and statutory provisions. In this context, we have also to bear in mind the exposition of law by a Constitution Bench in State of Punjab Vs. Jagdip Singh & Ors. (1964 (4) SCR 964). It was held therein, "In our opinion, where a Government servant has no right to a post or to a particular status, though an authority under the Government acting beyond its competence had purported to give that person a status which it was not entitled to give, he will not in law be deemed to have been validly appointed to the post or given the particular status."

13. During the course of the arguments, various orders of courts either interim or final were brought to our notice. The purport of those orders more or less was the issue of directions for continuation or absorption without referring to the legal position obtaining. Learned counsel for the State of Karnataka submitted that chaos has been created by such orders

without reference to legal principles and it is time that this Court settled the law once for all so that in case the court finds that such orders should not be made, the courts, especially, the High Courts would be precluded from issuing such directions or passing such orders. The submission of learned counsel for the respondents based on the various orders passed by the High Court or by the Government pursuant to the directions of Court also highlights the need for settling the law by this Court. The bypassing of the constitutional scheme cannot be perpetuated by the passing of orders without dealing with and deciding the validity of such orders on the touchstone of constitutionality. While approaching the questions falling for our decision, it is necessary to bear this in mind and to bring about certainty in the matter of public employment. The argument on behalf of some of the respondents is that this Court having once directed regularization in the Dharwad case (supra), all those appointed temporarily at any point of time would be entitled to be regularized since otherwise it would be discrimination between those similarly situated and in that view, all appointments made on daily wages, temporarily or contractually, must be directed to be regularized. Acceptance of this argument would mean that appointments made otherwise than by a regular process of selection would become the order of the day completely jettisoning the constitutional scheme of appointment. This argument also highlights the need for this Court to formally lay down the law on the question and ensure certainty in dealings relating to public employment. The very divergence in approach in this Court, the so-called equitable approach made in some, as against those decisions which have insisted on the rules being followed, also justifies a firm decision by this Court one way or the other. It is necessary to put an end to uncertainty and clarify the legal position emerging from the constitutional scheme, leaving the High Courts to follow necessarily, the law thus laid down.

14. Even at the threshold, it is necessary to keep in mind the distinction between regularization and conferment of permanence in service jurisprudence. In STATE OF MYSORE Vs. S.V. NARAYANAPPA [1967 (1) S.C.R. 128], this Court stated that it was a mis-conception to consider that regularization meant permanence. In R.N. NANJUNDAPPA Vs T. THIMMIAH & ANR. [(1972) 2 S.C.R. 799], this Court dealt with an argument that regularization would mean conferring the quality of permanence on the appointment. This Court stated:-

"Counsel on behalf of the respondent contended that regularization would mean conferring the quality of permanence on the appointment, whereas counsel on behalf of the State contended that regularization did not mean permanence but that it was a case of regularization of the rules under Article 309. Both the contentions are fallacious. If the appointment itself is in infraction of the rules or if it is in violation of the provisions of the Constitution, illegality cannot be regularized. Ratification or regularization is possible of an act which is within the power and province of the authority, but there has been some non-compliance with procedure or manner which does not go to the root of the appointment. Regularization cannot be said to be a mode of recruitment. To accede to such a proposition would be to introduce a new head of appointment in defiance of rules or it may have the effect of setting at naught the rules."

In B.N. Nagarajan & Ors. Vs. State of Karnataka & Ors. [(1979) 3 SCR 937], this court clearly held that the words "regular" or "regularization" do not connote permanence and cannot be construed so as to convey an idea of the nature of tenure of appointments. They are terms calculated to condone any procedural irregularities and are meant to cure only such defects as are attributable to methodology followed in making the appointments. This court emphasized that when rules framed under Article 309 of the Constitution of India are in force, no regularization is permissible in exercise of the executive powers of the Government under Article 162 of the Constitution in contravention of the rules. These decisions and the principles recognized therein have not been dissented to by this Court and on principle, we see no reason not to accept the proposition as enunciated in the above decisions. We have, therefore, to keep this distinction in mind and proceed on the basis that only something that is irregular for want of compliance with one of the elements in the process of selection which does not go to the root of the process, can be regularized and that it alone can be regularized and granting permanence of employment is a totally different concept and cannot be equated with regularization.

20. We may now consider, State of Haryana Vs. Piara Singh and Others [1992) 3 SCR 826]. There, the court was considering the sustainability of certain directions issued by the High Court in the light of various orders passed by the State for the absorption of its ad hoc or temporary employees and daily wagers

or casual labour. This Court started by saying: "Ordinarily speaking, the creation and abolition of a post is the prerogative of the Executive. It is the Executive again that lays down the conditions of service subject, of course, to a law made by the appropriate legislature. This power to prescribe the conditions of service can be exercised either by making rules under the proviso to Article 309 of the Constitution or (in the absence of such rules) by issued rules/instructions in exercise of its executive power. The court comes into the picture only to ensure observance of fundamental rights, statutory provisions, rules and other instructions, if any governing the conditions of service" This Court then referred to some of the earlier decisions of this Court while stating: "The main concern of the court in such matters is to ensure the rule of law and to see that the Executive acts fairly and gives a fair deal to its employees consistent with the requirements of Articles 14 and 16. It also means that the State should not exploit its employees nor should it seek to take advantage of the helplessness and misery of either the unemployed persons or the employees, as the case may be. As is often said, the State must be a model employer. It is for this reason, it is held that equal pay must be given for equal work, which is indeed one of the directive principles of the Constitution. It is for this very reason it is held that a person should not be kept in a temporary or ad hoc status for long. Where a temporary or ad hoc appointment is continued for long the court presumes that there is need and warrant for a regular post and accordingly directs regularization. While all the situations in which the court may act to ensure fairness cannot be detailed here, it is sufficient to indicate that the guiding principles are the ones stated above."

This Court then concluded in paragraphs 45 to 50:

"The normal rule, of course, is regular recruitment through the prescribed agency but exigencies of administration may sometimes call for an ad hoc or temporary appointment to be made. In such a situation, effort should always be to replace such an ad hoc/temporary employee by a regularly selected employee as early as possible. Such a temporary employee may also compete along with others for such regular selection/appointment. If he gets selected, well and good, but if he does not, he must give way to the regularly selected candidate. The appointment of the regularly selected candidate cannot be withheld or kept in abeyance for the sake of such an

ad hoc/temporary employee.

Secondly, an ad hoc or temporary employee should not be replaced by another ad hoc or temporary employee; he must be replaced only by a regularly selected employee. This is necessary to avoid arbitrary action on the part of the appointing authority.

Thirdly, even where an ad hoc or temporary employment is necessitated on account of the exigencies of administration, he should ordinarily be drawn from the employment exchange unless it cannot brook delay in which case the pressing cause must be stated on the file. If no candidate is available or is not sponsored by the employment exchange, some appropriate method consistent with the requirements of Article 16 should be followed. In other words, there must be a notice published in the appropriate manner calling for applications and all those who apply in response thereto should be considered fairly. An unqualified person ought to be appointed only when qualified persons are not available through the above processes. If for any reason, an ad hoc or temporary employee is continued for a fairly long spell, the authorities must consider his case for regularization provided he is eligible and qualified according to the rules and his service record is satisfactory and his appointment does not run counter to the reservation policy of the State"

With respect, why should the State be allowed to depart from the normal rule and indulge in temporary employment in permanent posts? This Court, in our view, is bound to insist on the State making regular and proper recruitments and is bound not to encourage or shut its eyes to the persistent transgression of the rules of regular recruitment. The direction to make permanent -- the distinction between regularization and making permanent, was not emphasized here -- can only encourage the State, the model employer, to flout its own rules and would confer undue benefits on a few at the cost of many waiting to compete. With respect, the direction made in paragraph 50 of *Piara Singh (supra)* are to some extent inconsistent with the conclusion in paragraph 45 therein.

With great respect, it appears to us that the last of the directions clearly runs counter to the constitutional scheme of employment recognized in the earlier part of the decision. Really, it cannot be said that this decision has laid down the law that all ad hoc, temporary or casual employees engaged without

following the regular recruitment procedure should be made permanent.

43. Normally, what is sought for by such temporary employees when they approach the court, is the issue of a writ of mandamus directing the employer, the State or its instrumentalities, to absorb them in permanent service or to allow them to continue. In this context, the question arises whether a mandamus could be issued in favour of such persons. At this juncture, it will be proper to refer to the decision of the Constitution Bench of this Court in *Dr. Rai Shivendra Bahadur Vs. The Governing Body of the Nalanda College* [(1962) Supp. 2 SCR 144]. That case arose out of a refusal to promote the writ petitioner therein as the Principal of a college. This Court held that in order that a mandamus may issue to compel the authorities to do something, it must be shown that the statute imposes a legal duty on the authority and the aggrieved party had a legal right under the statute or rule to enforce it. This classical position continues and a mandamus could not be issued in favour of the employees directing the government to make them permanent since the employees cannot show that they have an enforceable legal right to be permanently absorbed or that the State has a legal duty to make them permanent.

44. One aspect needs to be clarified. There may be cases where irregular appointments (not illegal appointments) as explained in *S.V. NARAYANAPPA (supra)*, *R.N. NANJUNDAPPA (supra)*, and *B.N. NAGARAJAN (supra)*, and referred to in paragraph 15 above, of duly qualified persons in duly sanctioned vacant posts might have been made and the employees have continued to work for ten years or more but without the intervention of orders of courts or of tribunals. The question of regularization of the services of such employees may have to be considered on merits in the light of the principles settled by this Court in the cases above referred to and in the light of this judgment. In that context, the Union of India, the State Governments and their instrumentalities should take steps to regularize as a one time measure, the services of such irregularly appointed, who have worked for ten years or more in duly sanctioned posts but not under cover of orders of courts or of tribunals and should further ensure that regular recruitments are undertaken to fill those vacant sanctioned posts that require to be filled up, in

cases where temporary employees or daily wagers are being now employed. The process must be set in motion within six months from this date. We also clarify that regularization, if any already made, but not subjudice, need not be reopened based on this judgment, but there should be no further by-passing of the constitutional requirement and regularizing or making permanent, those not duly appointed as per the constitutional scheme.

45. It is also clarified that those decisions which run counter to the principle settled in this decision, or in which directions running counter to what we have held herein, will stand denuded of their status as precedents.

46. In cases relating to service in the commercial taxes department, the High Court has directed that those engaged on daily wages, be paid wages equal to the salary and allowances that are being paid to the regular employees of their cadre in government service, with effect from the dates from which they were respectively appointed. The objection taken was to the direction for payment from the dates of engagement. We find that the High Court had clearly gone wrong in directing that these employees be paid salary equal to the salary and allowances that are being paid to the regular employees of their cadre in government service, with effect from the dates from which they were respectively engaged or appointed. It was not open to the High Court to impose such an obligation on the State when the very question before the High Court in the case was whether these employees were entitled to have equal pay for equal work so called and were entitled to any other benefit. They had also been engaged in the teeth of directions not to do so. We are, therefore, of the view that, at best, the Division Bench of the High Court should have directed that wages equal to the salary that are being paid to regular employees be paid to these daily wage employees with effect from the date of its judgment. Hence, that part of the direction of the Division Bench is modified and it is directed that these daily wage earners be paid wages equal to the salary at the lowest grade of employees of their cadre in the Commercial Taxes Department in government service, from the date of the judgment of the Division Bench of the High Court. Since, they are only daily wage earners, there would be no question of other allowances being paid to them. In view of our conclusion, that Courts are not expected to issue

directions for making such persons permanent in service, we set aside that part of the direction of the High Court directing the Government to consider their cases for regularization. We also notice that the High Court has not adverted to the aspect as to whether it was regularization or it was giving permanency that was being directed by the High Court. In such a situation, the direction in that regard will stand deleted and the appeals filed by the State would stand allowed to that extent. If sanctioned posts are vacant (they are said to be vacant) the State will take immediate steps for filling those posts by a regular process of selection. But when regular recruitment is undertaken, the respondents in C.A. No. 3595-3612 and those in the Commercial Taxes Department similarly situated, will be allowed to compete, waiving the age restriction imposed for the recruitment and giving some weightage for their having been engaged for work in the Department for a significant period of time. That would be the extent of the exercise of power by this Court under Article 142 of the Constitution to do justice to them.

47. Coming to Civil Appeal Nos. 1861-2063 of 2001, in view of our conclusion on the questions referred to, no relief can be granted, that too to an indeterminate number of members of the association. These appointments or engagements were also made in the teeth of directions of the Government not to make such appointments and it is impermissible to recognize such appointments made in the teeth of directions issued by the Government in that regard. We have also held that they are not legally entitled to any such relief. Granting of the relief claimed would mean paying a premium for defiance and insubordination by those concerned who engaged these persons against the interdict in that behalf. Thus, on the whole, the appellants in these appeals are found to be not entitled to any relief. These appeals have, therefore, to be dismissed.

48. C.A. Nos. 3520-24 of 2002 have also to be allowed since the decision of the Zilla Parishads to make permanent the employees cannot be accepted as legal. Nor can the employees be directed to be treated as employees of the Government, in the circumstances. The direction of the High Court is found unsustainable.

49. In the result, Civil Appeal Nos. 3595-3612 of 1999, Civil Appeal No. 3849 of 2001, Civil Appeal Nos. 3520-3524 of 2002 and Civil appeal arising out of Special Leave Petition (Civil) Nos.9103-9105 of 2001 are allowed subject to the direction issued under Article 142 of the Constitution in paragraph 46 and the general directions contained in paragraph 44 of the judgment and Civil Appeal Nos. 1861-2063 of 2001 are dismissed. There will be no order as to costs.

9. The Hon'ble two Judges of the Supreme Court of India in the case of Secretary to Government Vs. R. Govindasamy and others reported in [(2014) 4 SCC 769] reiterated that exercising power under Article 226 of the Constitution will not issue directions for regularization, absorption or permanent continuance, unless the employees claiming regularization have been appointed in pursuance of a regular recruitment in accordance with relevant rules in an open competitive process, against sanctioned vacant post.

10. The learned counsel appearing for the writ petitioners reiterated that the writ petitioners are not insisting for regularization and their claim is to give preference over and above the open market candidates. Such a preference cannot be provided in view of the fact that all appointment to the public post should be done in accordance with the regular rules in force. Weightage if any, in respect of the candidates who are already employed on contract basis has to be given opportunity in accordance with the rules itself. A mere preference cannot be provided which is not contemplated under the recruitment rules. Because, the petitioners at the time of accepting contract employment were aware of the fact that the nature of the employment is temporary and they may not be recruited through recruitment rules in force. Thus, priority or weightage in respect of the contract employment has to be provided only in accordance with the rules of the board and not in otherwise.

11. Equal opportunity for public employment is a constitutional mandate. The state cannot violate the recruitment rules while undertaking the process of employment. No doubt, the writ petitioners served as contract labourers for a considerable length of time. However, their claims are to be considered only in accordance with the rules in force and equal opportunity being a constitutional perspective, the respondents are bound to follow the same and any violation of constitutional principles will be in violation of Article 14 and 16 of the Constitution of India. This being the principles to be adopted while undertaking the process of appointment, the respondents have to consider all the cases equally including the writ petitioners', if they are otherwise fully qualified in accordance with the service rules in force. This being the

legal principles settled by the Hon'ble Apex Court of India as well as this Court, there is no reason to consider the claim of the writ petitioners.

12.The learned counsel appearing for the writ petitioners brought to the notice of this Court that the Inspector of Labour has already passed an order for the regularization of the services of the writ petitioners. This Court cannot consider such orders passed by the Inspector of Labours. In view of the legal principles settled by the Constitutional Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, the Inspectors of Labours are also bound by the Constitutional Bench Judgment which becomes the law of the line and regularization, permanent absorption and appointments cannot be granted contrary to the recruitment rules in force. Thus, this Court is not inclined to consider the argument that the Inspector of Labour has already passed an order for regularization in respect of the writ petitioners.

13.Accordingly, this Court wishes the writ petitioners for securing the public employment only through participating in the open competitive process in accordance with the rules in force. The respondents are bound to consider the case of the writ petitioners also in accordance with the recruitment rules in force and they cannot be given any priority or preference over and above all other qualified candidates in view of the equality clause provided under the Constitution emphasized by the Constitutional Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

14.Accordingly, the writ petition stands dismissed. However, there is no order as to costs. Consequently, the connected Miscellaneous Petition is closed.

Sd/-
Deputy Registrar

/true copy/

सत्यमेव जयते
Sub Asst. Registrar

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To

1.The Chariman,
Tamil Nadu Electricity Board,
No.800 Anna Salai,
Chennai - 600 002.

2.The Chief Engineer (Personnel),
Tamil Nadu Electricity Board,
No.800 Anna Salai,
Chennai - 600 002.

+ 1 cc to Mr.PremKumar Advocate,SR.87262

+ 1 cc to Mrs.R.Varalakshmi Advocate,SR.87303

W.P.No.12937 of 2012
and
M.P.No.1 of 2012

nr 18/01/2018



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