

HONOURABLE SRI JUSTICE P.NAVEEN RAO

WRIT PETITION NO.20434 OF 2018

Date: 03.07.2018

Between:

Smt. Aliya Begum w/o. late Md.Tajuddin, Aged about 56 years,
r/o. H.No.3-8-72/2, Shanthinagar, RajannaSircilla,
Karimnagar district and another.

....Petitioners

and

The State of Telangana, rep.by its Principal Secretary (Home),
Secretariat Buildings, Hyderabad and two others.

.....Respondents



The Court made the following:

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ORDER:

First petitioner herein is the wife of deceased Tajuddin. Second petitioner is the eldest son of first petitioner and deceased Tajuddin. Tajuddin was working as Head Constable and had rendered 21 years of service. He died due to Cardiac arrest on 17.12.1997. At the time of death, second petitioner was six years old. First petitioner made application on 14.10.1998 to respondent no.3 seeking compassionate appointment stating that she is raising her family on a meager pension of Rs.1300/- and therefore requested to be appointed on compassionate grounds as an Attender. As there was no response to her representation, she made another representation on 28.06.1999. Respondent No.3 issued office memo dated 29.06.1999 rejecting the application made by the first petitioner stating that application for compassionate appointment was made after one and a half years from the date of death of her deceased husband.

2. After completion of intermediate education of second petitioner, first petitioner made an application dated 26.3.2012 to provide employment to second petitioner for compassionate appointment, explaining financial distress. The same was rejected by Respondent No.3 vide memo dated 21.11.2014. Petitioner No.2 continued to make representations requesting for appointment. Alleging inaction this writ petition is filed. Petitioners pray to set aside orders dated 29.6.1999 and 8.5.2014 and to direct respondents to consider their request to provide employment on compassionate grounds.

3. The issue for consideration is whether claim of petitioners to provide employment on compassionate grounds after 21 years of death of employee is valid?

4. First appointment to public post whether it is in State/ Central service or service in the public-sector undertakings should be in accordance with the Rules/Regulations governing the services. Such recruitment should be open to all eligible candidates and selections are to be made in transparent manner and should stand the test of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution of India. Certain exemptions are carved out to this constitutional norm to make recruitment and one such exception is “appointment on compassionate grounds”. In Public employment such scheme is prevalent. This scheme of compassionate appointment is in recognition of the employer’s commitment to look after the members of the family of the employee who had premature death/forced to retire from service on him/her being declared as medically unfit, much before he/she would attain the age of superannuation leaving the family members in lurch. The scheme is intended to give a kind of protection to the members of the deceased employee family due to loss of breadwinner in the family or premature retirement of bread winner on health grounds upsetting the family financial calculations.

5. The compassionate appointment is regulated by the scheme formulated by the employer. Ordinarily such scheme envisages provision of appointment to posts classified as Class-III and Class-IV which are at the bottom of hierarchical

structure of any organization. Such appointment is extended to wife or children of the deceased employee/retired on medical invalidation and appointment should be provided soon after the occurrence of event. In case of death, ordinarily a ceiling of one year is imposed to make a claim for such appointment with relaxation of one more year in case the children are minors and would attain majority within two years from the date of demise. Some employers prescribe ceiling on consideration of such claims and some employers provide financial package in lieu of such appointment.

6. Consideration of claim for compassionate appointment depends on various factors, such as, the nature of employment of former employee, the financial strength of the family, the number of dependents of Ex-employee, status of the family members and date of submission of application. The foremost factor for consideration by employer is destitute circumstances prevailing in the family requiring such employment. Thus, proximity to occurrence of event is very significant. If family has survived the calamity and sustained for reasonable time without the financial support in the form of salary of the earlier bread winner, it is presumed that the family is not in destitute circumstances requiring such appointment.

7. The scheme of compassionate appointment being an exception to the normal mode of recruitment to public service, it should receive strict and narrow construction.

8. It is wrong to assume that a right is vested in the dependent of ex-employee to seek employment at any time

irrespective of date of demise/retirement on medical grounds and irrespective of the financial status of the family and after long lapse of time.

9. Provision of employment on compassionate grounds is carved out to meet a specific contingency, i.e., to provide succor in the form of employment to dependents of ex-employee who were suddenly deprived of an earning member and the death/medical invalidation would lead them to penury unless employment is provided. It is intended to tide over the crisis engulfing the family. It is something akin to firefighting mechanism. This crisis cannot be treated as continuous. If claim is belated, the very fact that family has survived for a long time without such employment would militate against such claim. It is to be born in mind that there are millions of Indians who need succor and their families are also in dire need of employment. Highly educated people are driven to seek menial jobs out of desperation.

10. In the long line of precedent decisions this issue has come up for consideration before Supreme Court. Broad principles that emerge from the decisions of the Supreme Court in i) **Umesh Kumar Nagpal v. State of Haryana**¹; ii) **Union of India v. Bhagwan Singh**²; iii) **Director of Education (Secondary) v. Pushpendra Kumar**³; iv) **Bhawani Prasad Sonkar v. Union of**

¹ (1994) 4 SCC 138

² (1995) 6 SCC 476

³ (1998) 5 SCC 192

India⁴;v)CCE & Customs v. Prabhat Singh⁵; vi)MGB Gramin Bank

v. Chakrawarti Singh ⁶ ; vii)SBI v. Surya Narain Tripathi ⁷ ;

viii)Canara Bank v. M. Mahesh Kumar⁸,are as under:

1. The appointment on compassionate grounds is an exception to the normal recruitment procedure to public posts. An exception can not subsume the main provision.
2. The object of granting compassionate employment is to relieve the family of financial constraints on account of untimely demise of bread winner/ bread winner developed serious health problem losing his job and to enable the family to tide over the sudden crisis.
3. Employment under the scheme can be provided only if the employer is satisfied that unless the employment is provided the family will not be able to meet the crisis and only after assessment of financial condition.
4. Posts in class III and class IV should alone be offered.
5. The consideration for employment on compassionate grounds is not a vested right which can be exercised at any time in future.
6. Claim for compassionate employment should be made within a reasonable time or within the time specified in the scheme formulated by employer. It cannot be claimed and offered after lapse of time and after crisis is over. Delay in seeking such a claim is anti thesis to the very objective of the scheme.
7. The scheme and the policy of compassionate appointment is binding both on the employer and the employee.
8. Being an exception, the scheme has to be strictly construed and confined only to the purpose it seeks to achieve.
9. The claim has to be considered within a reasonable period of time.
10. The Courts/Tribunals should not fall prey to any sympathy syndrome. The Courts are not supposed to carry Santa Claus's big bag on Christmas eve to disburse the gift of compassionate appointment to all those who seek a Court's intervention.
11. Consideration of claims should be to available vacancies. If there are more claims than available

⁴ (2011) 4 SCC 209

⁵ (2012) 13 SCC 412

⁶ (2014) 13 SCC 583

⁷ (2014) 15 SCC 739

⁸ (2015) 7 SCC 412

vacancies a fair and transparent selection process should be conducted based on a comparative compassion gradient or on some such like criteria.

12. An ameliorating relief should not be taken as opening an alternative mode of recruitment to public employment. Courts/Tribunals cannot confer benediction impelled by sympathetic consideration.

11. In G.O.Ms.No.687 G.A.D., dated 03.10.1977, Government notified scheme of appointment on compassionate grounds.

Clause (2) of the Scheme reads as under:

“(2) Application for appointment from such persons shall be entertained within the period of one year from the date of occurrence of the death of Government servant.”

12. In Memo No.618 Ser.A/78-11 General Administration (Ser.A) Department dated 17.12.1979, Government clarified that if dependent is a minor, he should apply immediately but consideration may be made in two years. Vide G O Ms No. 340 dated 12.6.1984, Government extended consideration to dependent aged 16 years. It reads:

“3(2).. The dependents of deceased Government employees who are 16 years of age may be considered for appointment to posts in the Last Grade Service in relaxation of rules subject to the condition that the service rendered prior to attaining majority shall not be counted till they attain majority.”

13. In G.O.Ms.No.165 General Administration Department dated 20.3.1989, Government ordered that minor dependent can apply within two years of date of demise of government servant.

It reads:

“The Government, after careful consideration, direct the dependent of a Government employee who dies in harness or retires on medical invalidation grounds, who is a minor seeking employment on compassionate grounds **should apply for appointment only after attaining the age of 18 years subject to the condition stipulated on Item 13 in Govt Memo first read above. Viz., the relief can be asked for within a reasonable time which may be two years from**

the date of demise of the Government servant but the spouse or the child of the deceased Government Servant should immediately apply for this relief.”

(emphasis supplied).

14. Further orders are issued in G.O.Ms.No.612 General Administration Department (Ser.A) dated 31.10.1991. To the extent relevant, it reads as under:

“(v) As the object of the social security scheme is to give immediate relief to the distressed family of the deceased Government employee, **a minor who does not attain majority within two years as specified in Government Memo No. 618/Ser-A/78-11, General Administration Department, dt 17.12.1979 after the demise of the Government employee, shall not be considered for appointment.** In such cases it is decided to grant ex-gratia to the widow/dependent of the deceased employee. Orders regarding quantum of ex-gratia will be issued separately.”

(emphasis supplied)

15. Noticing indiscriminate entertainment of claims under the scheme, Government reiterated its resolve to restrict consideration to claims arising immediately after the death of breadwinner and to restrict such claims to most deserving persons.

16. It's useful to extract paragraphs 2 & 3 of Memo No.11083/Ser.A/80-1 GAD dated 01.08.1980. The paragraphs read as under:

“2. There is an unfortunate tendency to treat the cases of appointment of the dependents of Government servants who dies in harness with extra consideration and sympathy. Some departments are obtaining orders of Government in cases in which death had occurred prior to 27thOctober, 1973, there is delay in seeking employment, etc., and making compassionate appointments. This tendency is not correct. In the present day society getting a job in Government is vital and important for the economic welfare of any family, as it is to the family of a deceased Government servant. Indiscriminate compassionate appointments in the cases of deceased Government servants who dies in harness will deprive other equally deserving poor families in securing jobs.

3. The main objective in having the scheme is to see that the family of deceased Government servant is not thrown out on the streets, immediately after his death. The purpose would be achieved only if a family could be given an alternative bread winner almost immediately. The purpose certainly is not served if years after the death of the Government servant, for a dependent is proposed for appointment. It is because of this consideration that a dead-line has been fixed beyond which, rightly enough, no consideration should be given. If the policy of the Government and the objective behind this policy are to be implemented with sympathy all-round, request for compassionate appointment in cases which violate the conditions stipulated in the scheme should not be entertained at all.”
(emphasis supplied)

17. In G.O.Ms.No.400, dated 12.09.1996 Government reiterated that no case of relaxation of any of the conditions stipulated in the scheme should be entertained. The same is reiterated in Government Memo No.68215/Ser.A/99-2 G.A.(Ser.A) Department, dated 02.06.2000. In Government Memo No.6068/Ser.A/2003-1 General Administration (Ser.A) Department dated 12.08.2003 all earlier orders are consolidated and notified.

18. It is, thus, clear that application must be submitted within the time specified and no relaxation of time to submit application would be considered.

19.1. At this stage, it is expedient to consider the decision of Supreme Court in **Eastern Coalfields Ltd. v. Anil Badyakar**⁹, wherein some what similar issue was considered by the apex Court.

19.2. To appreciate the issue the facts in a nutshell are as under:

⁹ (2009) 13 SCC 112

“Employee died on 31.12.1981 while in service. Immediately his wife made an application for provision of employment on compassionate appointment. On 07.03.1983 his daughter submitted application for provision of employment. It took some time among the family members to reach a consensus on who should be sponsored and on consent being given by other family members, claim of the husband of the daughter was considered. By orders dated 10.05.1993, the respondent was appointed under the scheme and he joined service. While so, the higher authority in the company reviewed that appointment and by his order dated 23.09.1993 cancelled the provisional appointment issued in favour of the respondent on the ground that it was belated appointment and, therefore, not entitled for such appointment. On challenge, the learned single Judge of the High Court set aside the said cancellation, which was affirmed by the Division Bench.”

19.3. On appeal by the company, Supreme Court reviewed the case law on the subject and held as under:

“20. The principles indicated above would give a clear indication that the compassionate appointment is not a vested right which can be exercised at any time in future. The compassionate employment cannot be claimed and offered after a lapse of time and after the crisis is over.

21. In the instant case the employee died in harness in the year 1981 and after a long squabble by the dependants of the deceased, they arrived at a settlement that the son-in-law of the second daughter who is unemployed may request for appointment on compassionate grounds. The request so made was accepted by the Personnel Manager of the Company subject to the approval of the Director of the Company. The Director (P), who is the competent authority for post facto approval, keeping in view the object and purpose of providing compassionate appointment has cancelled the provisional appointment on the ground that nearly after 12 years from the date of death of the employee such an appointment could not have been offered to the so-called dependant of the deceased employee.”

(emphasis supplied)

20. In **UMESH KUMAR NAGPAL**, Supreme Court delineated scope of claim for compassionate appointment. It is held:

“2. The whole object of granting compassionate employment is thus to enable the family to tide over the sudden crisis. The object is not to give a member of such family a post much less a post for

post held by the deceased. What is further, mere death of an employee in harness does not entitle his family to such source of livelihood. The Government or the public authority concerned has to examine the financial condition of the family of the deceased, and it is only if it is satisfied, that but for the provision of employment, the family will not be able to meet the crisis that a job is to be offered to the eligible member of the family

3. Unmindful of this legal position, some Governments and public authorities have been offering compassionate employment sometimes as a matter of course irrespective of the financial condition of the family of the deceased and sometimes even in posts above Classes III and IV. That is legally impermissible.

4. It is for these reasons that we have not been in a position to appreciate judgments of some of the High Courts which have justified and even directed compassionate employment either as a matter of course or in posts above Classes III and IV. We are also dismayed to find that the decision of this Court in *Sushma Gosain v. Union of India* [(1989) 4 SCC 468 : 1989 SCC (L&S) 662 : (1989) 11 ATC 878 : (1989) 4 SLR 327] has been misinterpreted to the point of distortion. The decision does not justify compassionate employment either as a matter of course or in employment in posts above Classes III and IV. ”

21. Learned counsel sought to contend that though application was made in time, it was rejected illegally as if application was not made in time and on that ground alone it is liable to be set aside. He would further contend that son was minor when employee died and soon after he attained majority application was made. According to learned counsel second petitioner was aged 6 years when employee died. After he attained age of majority another application was made on 26.3.2012 which was rejected on 21.11.2014. He would submit that rejection dated 21.11.2014 is liable to be set aside as it is not a speaking order. According to learned counsel family is still in destitute circumstances.

22. In the case on hand, the employee died on 17.12.1997; application was made on 14.10.1998 and claim was rejected on 28.6.1999 holding that there was delay in making such claim. The request made in the year 2012 to provide employment to 2nd petitioner though belated was also rejected on 21.11.2014. In spite of first rejection on 28.6.1999 and second rejection on 21.11.2014, petitioners went on making representations and alleging inaction this writ petition is filed.

23. As per the policy of Government, dependent should make application within one year of demise. A year of relaxation is given if child is minor falling short of 18 years of age at the time of death of employee. In the case on hand, 2nd petitioner was aged 6 years when death occurred. Thus, he is not eligible to claim employment as per the scheme. There is no provision to enlarge the time and entertain application whenever a minor attains majority.

24. Further, as noted from the precedent decisions, appointment on compassionate grounds is an exception to normal method of recruitment to public employment. It is intended to alleviate the suffering of the dependents due to sudden death of bread winner and intended to tie over immediate difficulties. It is not intended to act as a reserve right for a family member of deceased to stake claim whenever he wants employment. After 21 years, it cannot be said that family is still in destitute circumstances to grant such employment.

25. Having regard to Government policy and the object of the scheme of compassionate appointment propounded in the precedent decisions, the decision of the respondents rejecting the request of petitioner cannot be faulted.

26. Further claim was rejected on 28.06.1999 and this writ petition is filed 19 years after that rejection. There is inordinate delay and laches in invoking the jurisdiction of this Court. The writ remedy is equitable remedy and writ court has wide amplitude of discretion to grant or refuse to grant relief. Writ Court may refuse to entertain writ petition even if claim is valid if such claim is made after long lapse of time. Thus, even assuming 1st petitioner made an application within one year, the Court need not set aside order of rejection of claim dated 29.06.1999 at this distance of time on that ground. There is no indefeasible right to claim compassionate appointment. It cannot be said the family of the deceased employee should be extended the benefit of the scheme at this stage, i.e., after 21 years of the death of employee.

27. The Writ Petition deserves to be dismissed. It is accordingly dismissed. Pending miscellaneous petitions shall stand closed.

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