

HIGH COURT OF CHHATTISGARH AT BILASPUR**Writ Petition (S) No. 4 of 2019**

1. Hemant Kumar Soni S/o Shri Vishal Prasad Soni, Aged About 40 Years, Soni Para, Ward No. 16, Singhour, Bemetara, District Bemetara Chhattisgarh
2. Smt. Hemlata Sahu W/o Shri Umesh Kumar Sahu, Aged About 30 Years Ganjpara Bemetara, District Bemetara, Chhattisgarh

---- Petitioners**Versus**

1. Divisional Commissioner, Durg Division, Durg, Chhattisgarh
2. Collector, Bemetara, District Bemetara, Chhattisgarh
3. Chief Executive Officer, Janpad Panchayat Bemetara, District Bemetara Chhattisgarh
4. Janpad Panchayat Bemetara Through The General Administration Committee, Janpad Panchayat Bemetara, District Bemetara, Chhattisgarh

---- Respondents

For petitioner	:	Shri Pranjal Shukla, Advocate.
For State	:	Ms. Sunita Jain, Govt. Advocate

Hon'ble Shri Justice P. Sam Koshy**Order on Board****07/01/2019**

1. The challenge in the present Writ Petition is to the order Annexure - P/1 dated 07/01/2016 passed by the learned Commissioner, District Durg whereby the revision petition preferred by the petitioners against the order passed by the Collector on 09/07/2015 rejecting the appeal filed by the petitioners against the order of termination has been rejected.
2. The facts of the case are that, the petitioners were appointed as Shiksha Karmi-Grade-III under Janpad Panchayat, Bemetara, District

Bemetara vide order dated 16/07/2007 Annexure - P/4. The petitioners immediately assumed the office as Siksha Karmi and continued to work till the services of the petitioners were abruptly terminated vide order dated 10/06/2008 passed by the Chief Executive Officer, Janpad Panchaya, Bemetara, District Bemetara. That subsequent to the order of termination dated 10.06.2008, a writ petition i.e. WPS No. 3125/08 was filed challenging the order of termination. The said writ petition was filed by a group of persons. This Court after considering the facts and circumstances of the case, allowed the writ petition on 27.01.2014 whereby the impugned order of termination was quashed reserving the right of the respondents to proceed further in accordance with law after affording an opportunity of hearing to the petitioners therein. Subsequently, a fresh show cause notice was issued on 17.04.2014 to which the petitioners were submitted their reply. However, without proceeding further with the reply the respondents straightaway issued the order of termination Annexure P-3 dated 19.06.2014. Later on, the petitioners preferred an appeal before the Collector and the Collector in turn vide order dated 09.07.2015 rejected the appeal affirming the termination. The order of termination and the order of the Collector were subsequently challenged in a revision petition before the Divisional Commissioner and the Revisional Authority also affirmed the order of the competent authority as well the appellate authority and rejected the revision petition vide order dated 07.01.2016 Annexure P-1.

3. Counsel for the petitioners submits that the impugned order of termination as also the order passed by the Appellate Authority as well as the Revisional Authority are bad in law for the reason that, the termination of the petitioners was in total violation of Rule 7 of the Chhattisgarh Panchayat Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1999. He further

submits that, the law in this regard is by now well settled by a catena of decisions wherein it has been held that for the purpose of terminating an employee whose services are governed under the Rules of 1999, the respondent authorities are required to comply with the procedure prescribed under Rule 7. Having not done so, the impugned order is liable to be set-aside on this ground.

4. Contention of the counsel for the petitioners is that similar writ petitions were filed by a group of persons belonging to different Janpad Panchayats whose services were also terminated on identical set of facts and allegations and this Court has allowed all those writ petitions on 31.10.2018, the main case being WPS No. 1420/16 and other bunch of petitions and those were from Janpad Panchayat Berla as well as Bemetara. It was further contended that earlier also a similar writ petition i.e. WPS No. 984/18 was filed by similarly placed persons from Janpad Panchayat Saja which too stood allowed by this Court on 20.04.2018. In all these writ petitions the impugned order was set aside on the ground of non compliance of the statutory provision of Rule 7 of the Chhattisgarh Panchayat Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1999. Contention of the petitioners is that the facts of the present case also are identical and therefore, the impugned order in the present case also deserves to be set aside on the ground of parity.

5. The State counsel, however, opposing the petition submits that, it is a case where there were large scale of irregularities detected at the time of appointment and on due verification since it was found that the petitioners also have got advantage of that irregularities, their services have been terminated. Hence the action of the respondents cannot be said to be either malafide or in contravention to the provisions of law. He further submits

that, since it was a question of appointment being obtained by playing fraud and mischief, the requirement of compliance of Rule 7 may not be required as it has been duly enquired into by the appointing authorities themselves and who have found that there were certain lapses on part of the petitioners on account of which they were not entitled for appointment. Thus, State counsel prayed for rejection of the petition.

6. Recently on an identical set of facts arising out of the same District but from different Janpad Panchayat a bunch of Writ Petitions came up for hearing before this Court i.e. WPS No.1420/2016 d/on 31/10/2018 & Other connected matters. This Court vide order dated 31/10/2018 decided the said petitions and while deciding the same had considered the same issues which have been raised by the parties in the present case.

7. It would be relevant at this juncture to refer to the findings of this Court in the said order. For ready reference, paragraphs 9 to 12 is reproduced

herein under:-

“9. Given the aforesaid admitted factual position of the case as also the judgment of this court in the case similarly situated persons belonging to the other Janpad Panchayat i.e. Janpad Panchayat Saja and also taking note that they were also terminated arising out of the same enquiry and in whose case there already is an order of setting aside of the termination order, this court in exercise of judicial discipline propriety and precedence is inclined to apply the same analogy in deciding the case of the petitioners as well. In the said judgment of Rohini Jha(Supra), this court has observed in paragraphs 3 to 5 as under :

(3) Admittedly, on certain allegations, show cause notice “was issued to the petitioners and when the respondent authority was not satisfied with the reply of present petitioners, their services have been terminated. A Division Bench of this Court in the matter of Rooplal Nayak vs. State of Chhattisgarh and others, 2006(4) M.P.H.T. 99 (C.G.) has held that any of the major penalty prescribed under Rule 5(b) (iv) of the Rules, 1999 cannot be imposed on a member of Panchayat service to whom

the said Rules are applicable without conducting regular Departmental Enquiry as envisaged under Rule 7 of the Rules, 1999.

(4) In the case at hand, no departmental enquiry has been held as contemplated under Rule 7. The said provisions uses the words 'formal inquiry' with further stipulation that when an order for 'formal enquiry' has been made, the disciplinary authority shall frame Definite charges, communicate the same to the delinquent along with the statement of allegations, requiring him to submit within the specified time a written statement of defence and also to state whether he desires to be heard in person. Thereafter, the defence is required to to be permitted to inspect and take extracts from the records, which can be refused for reasons to be recorded in writing. On submission of reply by the delinquent, the disciplinary authority may himself enquire or appoint an enquiry officer. Appointment of Presenting Officer and seeking assistance of some other officers by the delinquent is also contemplated therein. The enquiry officer is also enabled to record evidence and thereafter, at the conclusion of the enquiry, the enquiry officer is supposed to prepare enquiry report, the copy of which is required to be furnished to the delinquent. Thus, the 'formal inquiry' envisaged under the Rules is akin to the procedure prescribed for a regular enquiry under Rule 14 of the C.G. Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1966.

(5) The materials made available to this Court nowhere indicate that any enquiry as contemplated under Rule 7 has been initiated or conducted against the petitioner. Therefore, the impugned order of termination is ex facie not sustainable in law and the same deserves to be set aside.

10. In the instant case also learned counsel for the respondents fairly submits that so far as the present petitioners are concerned, admittedly there has not been any Departmental Enquiry as such conducted. It was only a preliminary enquiry conducted and on the basis of the report of the preliminary enquiry the petitioners were issued with show cause notices and thereafter terminated. But,

what is admittedly clear is that in the course of conducting of preliminary enquiry also the petitioners were not taken into confidence neither were they granted opportunity to disprove the contentions which had been raised by the department or which the department was investigating upon.

11. XXXXXXXXXX

12. Accordingly, all the writ petitions stand allowed and disposed of in terms of Rohini Jha's case. The impugned orders of termination, rejection of their appeals by the appellate authority as well as revisional authority all stand

set aside/quashed for similar reasons as had been held in Rohini Jha's case, reserving the right of the department to proceed further, if they intend to do so, in accordance with provisions of law."

8. Having considered the view of this Court in the aforesaid order and the fact that it has based upon the earlier decision of this Court wherein it has been specifically held that for terminating an employee from service whose services are governed under the Rules of 1999 it is incumbent upon the respondents to have initiated the proceedings as are required under Rule 7.

9. Non-compliance of the said rule vitiates the entire action on part of the respondents. The impugned orders in the instant case i.e. the two orders passed by the Appellate Authority as also by the Revisional Authority dated 09/07/2015 and 07/01/2016 are thus unsustainable and the same deserve to be and are accordingly set-aside/quashed with consequences to follow.

10. However, this Court is of the view that since the petitioners have not discharged their duties during the intervening period, they would not be entitled for wages for the intervening period. However, the said period would be counted for the purpose of continuity in service.

11. Needless to mention that, since the Writ Petition is being allowed on the ground on non-compliance of Rule 7, the right of the Department would stand reserved if they feel so for initiating appropriate proceeding in accordance with the rules.

12. With the aforesaid observations, the Writ Petition stands allowed and disposed of.

Sd/-
(P. Sam Koshy)
JUDGE