

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 11.03.2019

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE S.M.SUBRAMANIAM

W.P.No.7447 of 2018 and
WMP.No.9259 of 2018

1. S.Subramani
2. A.Manickam
3. A.Duraisamy
4. S.Sekar
5. T.S.Arjunan

... Petitioners

Vs.

- 1.The State of Tamil Nadu
Rep. by its Principal Secretary
Environment and Forest (FR 2) Dept.,
Secretariate
Madras - 600 009

2. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
No. 15, Jeenis Road
Panagal Building
Saidapet
Chennai - 600 015

3. The District Forest Officer
Salem District
Salem

... Respondents

PRAYER: This Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, praying for the issue of a Writ of Mandamus, directing the respondents to regularize the petitioners service as Plot/Forest Watchers in the light of G.O. (3D) No.12, Environment and Forests (FR-2) Department dated 29.04.2008 and the recommendation of the 3rd respondent dated 22.12.2017 with all consequential monetary and service benefits by considering the petitioners representation dated 04.12.2017.

For Petitioners : Mr.R.Jayaprakash

For Respondents : Mr.Thangavadhana Balakrishnan
Additional Government Pleader
(Forest)

O R D E R

The relief sought for in the present writ petition is for a direction to direct the respondents to regularise the petitioners service as Plot/Forest Watchers in the light of G.O. (3D) No. 12, Environment and Forests (FR-2) Department dated 29.04.2008 and the recommendation of the 3rd respondent dated 22.12.2017 with all consequential monetary and service benefits by considering the petitioners representation dated 04.12.2017.

2. The learned counsel for the writ petitioner states that all the writ petitioners were appointed as Part Time Mazdoors in between the years 1978 - 1986 and thereafter, engaged as full time Mazdoors during the year 1995. The writ petitioners are working for long years and their services are regularly utilized by the Forest Department. Under these circumstances, the authorities had recommended the case of the writ petitioners for grant of regularisation or permanent absorption. Such recommendation were not considered by the competent authorities and still, the writ petitioners are serving as daily wage employees without any scope for regularisation. The learned counsel for the writ petitioner further states that even during the year 2005, the name of the writ petitioners were included in the list of persons, who all are eligible for regularisation. The case of the writ petitioners is that they are eligible for grant of regularisation in the year 2005 itself. The names of all the petitioners are found in the recommendation dated 15.02.2005. Therefore, the writ petitioners ought to have been brought under regular time scale of pay based on the said recommendation dated 15.02.2005.

3. It is contended that the Government also issued orders granting the benefit of regularisation to the daily wage employees on several occasions. The similarly placed persons were already absorbed and the names of the writ petitioners alone have not been considered by the respondents. Thus, the petitioners are constrained to move the present writ petition.

4. The learned counsel appearing on behalf of the respondent disputes the contention on behalf of the writ petitioner by stating that the writ petitioners were engaged under Petty Contract System with effect from 01.09.1995. They were engaged only on daily wage basis, which is purely temporary in nature and therefore, they cannot claim regularisation or permanent absorption. It is stated that three sandalwood depots are available in Tamilnadu i.e., at Tirupattur, Sathyamangalam and Salem. Sandalwood trees which are extracted from forests are roughly cleaned first and thereafter, final cleaning is done, so as to put them for public sale. These works were carried out through contract system and therefore, at no point of time, they were engaged as permanent employees in a sanctioned post.

Paragraph No. 5 of the counter affidavit filed by the respondent reads as under:

"The names of 23 workers of Tirupattur Division are included in the state-wide seniority list maintained for Village Social Forestry Workers / Plot Watchers so as to appoint them as Forest Watches in the Forest Department as and when vacancy arises vide G.O.(2D) No.12 Environment and Forests Department (FR-II) Dated 20.04.2008. The workers of Tirupattur Division sandalwood depot are paid consolidated wages from the year 1989 itself, where the workers joined as mazdoors during the years from 1970 to 1973. Whereas the petitioners engaged for sandalwood cleaning work from 1995 onwards only. The workers of Thirupattur depot are given consolidated wages whereas the petitioners are given wages under Minimum Wages Act with admissible dearness allowance from time to time. The petitioners earn wages depending upon the output when workers are paid consolidated wages they will be paid wages irrespective of the output. Whereas the petitioners are given daily wages with minimum wages. They cannot have the advantage / disadvantage of the workers of Tirupattur Sandalwood depot."

5. Admittedly, the writ petitioners were neither appointed in the sanctioned post nor recruited through the process of selection. Initial appointment was not made in accordance with the recruitment rules in force. This apart, mere continuance of service as daily wage employees would not confer any right on them to claim regularisation and permanent absorption, which is now settled by the Constitutional Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, in the decision of the State of Karnataka Vs. Umadevi reported in 2006 [4] SCC 1 and it is relevant to extract the following paragraphs:

"4. But, sometimes this process is not adhered to and the Constitutional scheme of public employment is by-passed. The Union, the States, their departments and instrumentalities have resorted to irregular appointments, especially in the lower rungs of the service, without reference to the duty to ensure a

proper appointment procedure through the Public Service Commission or otherwise as per the rules adopted and to permit these irregular appointees or those appointed on contract or on daily wages, to continue year after year, thus, keeping out those who are qualified to apply for the post concerned and depriving them of an opportunity to compete for the post. It has also led to persons who get employed, without the following of a regular procedure or even through the backdoor or on daily wages, approaching Courts, seeking directions to make them permanent in their posts and to prevent regular recruitment to the concerned posts. Courts have not always kept the legal aspects in mind and have occasionally even stayed the regular process of employment being set in motion and in some cases, even directed that these illegal, irregular or improper entrants be absorbed into service. A class of employment which can only be called 'litigious employment', has risen like a phoenix seriously impairing the constitutional scheme. Such orders are passed apparently in exercise of the wide powers under Article 226 of the Constitution of India. Whether the wide powers under Article 226 of the Constitution is intended to be used for a purpose certain to defeat the concept of social justice and equal opportunity for all, subject to affirmative action in the matter of public employment as recognized by our Constitution, has to be seriously pondered over. It is time, that Courts desist from issuing orders preventing regular selection or recruitment at the instance of such persons and from issuing directions for continuance of those who have not secured regular appointments as per procedure established. The passing of orders for continuance, tends to defeat the very Constitutional scheme of public employment. It has to be emphasized that this is not the role envisaged for High Courts in the scheme of things and their wide powers under Article 226 of the Constitution of India are not intended to be used for the purpose of perpetuating illegalities, irregularities or improprieties or for scuttling the whole scheme of public employment. Its role as the sentinel and as the guardian of equal rights protection should not be forgotten.

5. This Court has also on occasions issued directions which could not be said to be consistent with the Constitutional scheme of public employment. Such directions are issued presumably on the basis of equitable considerations or individualization of justice. The question arises, equity to whom? Equity for the handful of people who have approached the Court with

a claim, or equity for the teeming millions of this country seeking employment and seeking a fair opportunity for competing for employment? When one side of the coin is considered, the other side of the coin, has also to be considered and the way open to any court of law or justice, is to adhere to the law as laid down by the Constitution and not to make directions, which at times, even if do not run counter to the Constitutional scheme, certainly tend to water down the Constitutional requirements. It is this conflict that is reflected in these cases referred to the Constitution Bench.

12. In spite of this scheme, there may be occasions when the sovereign State or its instrumentalities will have to employ persons, in posts which are temporary, on daily wages, as additional hands or taking them in without following the required procedure, to discharge the duties in respect of the posts that are sanctioned and that are required to be filled in terms of the relevant procedure established by the Constitution or for work in temporary posts or projects that are not needed permanently. This right of the Union or of the State Government cannot but be recognized and there is nothing in the Constitution which prohibits such engaging of persons temporarily or on daily wages, to meet the needs of the situation. But the fact that such engagements are resorted to, cannot be used to defeat the very scheme of public employment. Nor can a court say that the Union or the State Governments do not have the right to engage persons in various capacities for a duration or until the work in a particular project is completed. Once this right of the Government is recognized and the mandate of the constitutional requirement for public employment is respected, there cannot be much difficulty in coming to the conclusion that it is ordinarily not proper for courts whether acting under Article 226 of the Constitution or under Article 32 of the Constitution, to direct absorption in permanent employment of those who have been engaged without following a due process of selection as envisaged by the constitutional scheme.

13. 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."

26. 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.

"39. There have been decisions which have taken the cue from the *Dharwad* (supra) case and given directions

for regularization, absorption or making permanent, employees engaged or appointed without following the due process or the rules for appointment. The philosophy behind this approach is seen set out in the recent decision in *The Workmen of Bhurkunda Colliery of M/s Central Coalfields Ltd. Vs. The Management of Bhurkunda Colliery of M/s Central Coalfields Ltd.* (JT 2006 (2) SC 1), though the legality or validity of such an approach has not been independently examined. But on a survey of authorities, the predominant view is seen to be that such appointments did not confer any right on the appointees and that the Court cannot direct their absorption or regularization or re-engagement or making them permanent.

"43. Thus, it is clear that adherence to the rule of equality in public employment is a basic feature of our Constitution and since the rule of law is the core of our Constitution, a Court would certainly be disabled from passing an order upholding a violation of Article 14 or in ordering the overlooking of the need to comply with the requirements of Article 14 read with Article 16 of the Constitution. Therefore, consistent with the scheme for public employment, this Court while laying down the law, has necessarily to hold that unless the appointment is in terms of the relevant rules and after a proper competition among qualified persons, the same would not confer any right on the appointee. If it is a contractual appointment, the appointment comes to an end at the end of the contract, if it were an engagement or appointment on daily wages or casual basis, the same would come to an end when it is discontinued. Similarly, a temporary employee could not claim to be made permanent on the expiry of his term of appointment. It has also to be clarified that merely because a temporary employee or a casual wage worker is continued for a time beyond the term of his appointment, he would not be entitled to be absorbed in regular service or made permanent, merely on the strength of such continuance, if the original appointment was not made by following a due process of selection as envisaged by the relevant rules. It is not open to the court to prevent regular recruitment at the instance of temporary employees whose period of employment has come to an end or of ad hoc employees who by the very nature of their appointment, do not acquire any right. High Courts acting under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, should not ordinarily issue directions for absorption, regularization, or permanent continuance unless the

recruitment itself was made regularly and in terms of the constitutional scheme. Merely because, an employee had continued under cover of an order of Court, which we have described as 'litigious employment' in the earlier part of the judgment, he would not be entitled to any right to be absorbed or made permanent in the service. In fact, in such cases, the High Court may not be justified in issuing interim directions, since, after all, if ultimately the employee approaching it is found entitled to relief, it may be possible for it to mould the relief in such a manner that ultimately no prejudice will be caused to him, whereas an interim direction to continue his employment would hold up the regular procedure for selection or impose on the State the burden of paying an employee who is really not required. The courts must be careful in ensuring that they do not interfere unduly with the economic arrangement of its affairs by the State or its instrumentalities or lend themselves the instruments to facilitate the bypassing of the constitutional and statutory mandates.

"44. The concept of 'equal pay for equal work' is different from the concept of conferring permanency on those who have been appointed on ad hoc basis, temporary basis, or based on no process of selection as envisaged by the Rules. This Court has in various decisions applied the principle of equal pay for equal work and has laid down the parameters for the application of that principle. The decisions are rested on the concept of equality enshrined in our Constitution in the light of the directive principles in that behalf. But the acceptance of that principle cannot lead to a position where the court could direct that appointments made without following the due procedure established by law, be deemed permanent or issue directions to treat them as permanent. Doing so, would be negation of the principle of equality of opportunity. The power to make an order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before this Court, would not normally be used for giving the go-by to the procedure established by law in the matter of public employment. Take the situation arising in the cases before us from the State of Karnataka. Therein, after the Dharwad decision, the Government had issued repeated directions and mandatory orders that no temporary or ad hoc employment or engagement be given. Some of the authorities and departments had ignored those directions or defied those directions and had continued to give employment, specifically interdicted by the orders

issued by the executive. Some of the appointing officers have even been punished for their defiance. It would not be just or proper to pass an order in exercise of jurisdiction under Article 226 or 32 of the Constitution or in exercise of power under Article 142 of the Constitution of India permitting those persons engaged, to be absorbed or to be made permanent, based on their appointments or engagements. Complete justice would be justice according to law and though it would be open to this Court to mould the relief, this Court would not grant a relief which would amount to perpetuating an illegality.

45. While directing that appointments, temporary or casual, be regularized or made permanent, courts are swayed by the fact that the concerned person has worked for some time and in some cases for a considerable length of time. It is not as if the person who accepts an engagement either temporary or casual in nature, is not aware of the nature of his employment. He accepts the employment with eyes open. It may be true that he is not in a position to bargain -- not at arms length -- since he might have been searching for some employment so as to eke out his livelihood and accepts whatever he gets. But on that ground alone, it would not be appropriate to jettison the constitutional scheme of appointment and to take the view that a person who has temporarily or casually got employed should be directed to be continued permanently. By doing so, it will be creating another mode of public appointment which is not permissible. If the court were to void a contractual employment of this nature on the ground that the parties were not having equal bargaining power, that too would not enable the court to grant any relief to that employee. A total embargo on such casual or temporary employment is not possible, given the exigencies of administration and if imposed, would only mean that some people who at least get employment temporarily, contractually or casually, would not be getting even that employment when securing of such employment brings at least some succor to them. After all, innumerable citizens of our vast country are in search of employment and one is not compelled to accept a casual or temporary employment if one is not inclined to go in for such an employment. It is in that context that one has to proceed on the basis that the employment was accepted fully knowing the nature of it and the consequences flowing from it. In other words, even while accepting the employment, the person concerned knows the nature of his employment. It is not an appointment to a post in

the real sense of the term. The claim acquired by him in the post in which he is temporarily employed or the interest in that post cannot be considered to be of such a magnitude as to enable the giving up of the procedure established, for making regular appointments to available posts in the services of the State. The argument that since one has been working for some time in the post, it will not be just to discontinue him, even though he was aware of the nature of the employment when he first took it up, is not one that would enable the jettisoning of the procedure established by law for public employment and would have to fail when tested on the touchstone of constitutionality and equality of opportunity enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution of India.

"49. It is contended that the State action in not regularizing the employees was not fair within the framework of the rule of law. The rule of law compels the State to make appointments as envisaged by the Constitution and in the manner we have indicated earlier. In most of these cases, no doubt, the employees had worked for some length of time but this has also been brought about by the pendency of proceedings in Tribunals and courts initiated at the instance of the employees. Moreover, accepting an argument of this nature would mean that the State would be permitted to perpetuate an illegality in the matter of public employment and that would be a negation of the constitutional scheme adopted by us, the people of India. It is therefore not possible to accept the argument that there must be a direction to make permanent all the persons employed on daily wages. When the court is approached for relief by way of a writ, the court has necessarily to ask itself whether the person before it had any legal right to be enforced. Considered in the light of the very clear constitutional scheme, it cannot be said that the employees have been able to establish a legal right to be made permanent even though they have never been appointed in terms of the relevant rules or in adherence of Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution".

6. In this regard, once again the Supreme Court in the case of State of Tamil Nadu through Secretary to Government,

Commercial Taxes and Registration Department, Secretariat and Another Vs. A.Singamuthu reported in 2017 [4] SCC 113 has held that the Courts are repeatedly directing the States to follow the constitutional scheme for appointing candidates in public post. The Government, time and again, is violating the legal dictums and favouring some individuals, attempting to get public employment through back door entry. The State must be a model employer and the State is bound to follow the constitutional principles. The State cannot discriminate the citizens and the State is the authority to follow Articles 14 and 16 in respect of all citizens scrupulously. If the State itself is discriminating the citizens and encouraging the back door appointment to public post, this Court is unable to imagine the plight of the meritorious citizens of this Country, who are longing for public employment. Few miscreant officials have to be put on task and strict action against those officials are to be undertaken.

7. Thus, this Court is of the firm and clear opinion that all the citizens should get equal treatment from the Government and the Government, being the model employer, cannot discriminate the citizens.

In this regard, the mere continuation of services on temporary/casual/daily wages would not confer any right and in order to

appoint any candidate in the permanent basis in the public post, the scheme recognized by the constitution has to be strictly adhered to and the violation of the same to be viewed seriously. Repeatedly, the Constitutional Courts are flooded with these kind of writ petitions and the candidates, who entered through back door entry in public post, are repeatedly filing writ petition in order to secure regularisation through Courts after few years. The Courts are also unable to solve this, in view of the continuous irregularities and illegalities committed in this regard. Since, at the time of weighing the principles of equity, the Courts have to grant some relief to the persons who are in stress and strain on account of long period of services. Though such cases are considered on few occasions, those cases can never be cited as precedent nor the Government to follow such cases as principle. In such view of the matter, no further consideration can be shown in this writ petition."

8. In view of the fact that the writ petitioners were engaged as daily wage employees on contract basis, they are not entitled for benefit of regularisation and permanent absorption as per the decisions of the Supreme Court of India cited supra.

9. Accordingly, the present writ petition stands dismissed.
No costs. Consequently, connected miscellaneous petition is closed.

Sd/-
Assistant Registrar (CS-III)

//True copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

Kmm

To

1. The Principal Secretary
Environment and Forest (FR 2) Dept.,
Secretariate
Madras - 600 009
2. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
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3. The District Forest Officer
Salem District
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+2cc to Mr.R.JayaPrakash, Advocate SR.No.23662,22958

+1cc to Special Government Pleader SR.No.22842

W.P.No.7447 of 2018

RR (CO)
GMY (30/04/2019)

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