

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED :25.09.2019

CORAM

THE HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE M.DHANDAPANI

W.P.No.25597 of 2019

and

W.M.P.Nos.25132 and 25133 of 2019

S.K.Ramesh

..Petitioner

vs

1.The Managing Director,
Tamil Nadu Sate Marketing Corporation Ltd
(TASMAC)
CMDA Tower-II, IV Floor,
Gandhi Irwin Bridge Road,
Egmore, Chennai-600 008.

2.The Senior Regional Manager,
Chennai Region.
Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation Ltd.,
(TASMAC)
735, IV Floor, L.L.A. Building,
Anna Salai, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, 600 002.

3.The District Manager, Chennai (North),
Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation Ltd.,
(TASMAC), IMFS Depot, Bangalore High Road,
Chembarambakkam Village,
Thiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu-600 123.

.. Respondents

Prayer: Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying to issue a Writ of Certiorari, calling for the records of the first respondent in connection with the impugned orders passed by him in R.C.No.M3/6518/2019 dated 20/08/2019 and quash the same in so far as the petitioner is concerned.

For Petitioner : Mr.K.Venkataramani, Senior Counsel
For Mr.M.Muthappan

For Respondents : Mr.M.Johnkennedy

O R D E R

Writ Petition is filed for issuance of Writ of Certiorari, calling for the records of the 1st respondent in connection with the impugned orders passed by him in R.C.No.M3/6518/2019 dated 20/08/2019 and quash the same in so far as the petitioner is concerned.

2. Heard the arguments of Mr.K.Venkataramani, Senior Counsel appearing for the petitioner and Mr.M.John Kennedy, learned counsel appearing for the respondents and perused the records.

3.The case of the petitioner is that the petitioner was appointed as Supervisor on consolidated pay basis in the respondent Tasmac shop and the petitioner is also a District President of the Tiruvallur East District Tasmac Anna Labour Union for the last several years. After serving various places in Tiruvallur District, he is now serving as Supervisor Tasmac shop No.8889, Ayyapakkam, Ambattur for the last 1-1/2 years. In the month of February 2019, the petitioner and other members of various Unions visited the 2nd respondent office in order to submit and represent the grievance of various members of the Union in Tiruvallur East District. On that day, the petitioner was carrying Rs.20,000/- to make payment of subscription at his Union office and on the inspection, the amount was seized by the Vigilance officials. Thereafter, the petitioner made a representation to the Vigilance officials to refund the amount and subsequently, they registered a case against the petitioner. In the meantime, on 20.08.2019, the impugned transfer order was passed transferring the petitioner from Chennai Region to an insignificant post at remote area. Challenging the said impugned order, the present writ petition is filed.

4. The learned counsel for the petitioner would submit that the petitioner is serving in the Tasmac shop for several years. However, merely because of misappropriation, a case was registered against the petitioner and thereafter, the transfer was made with malafide intention. Hence, the impugned order passed by the 1st respondent is liable to be set aside.

5. The respondents have filed a counter in which para 7, 8, 9 and 11 reads as follows:

7. It is submitted that during the check, the petitioner along with 14 other TASMAL staff among others were also present in the office of the Senior Regional Manager. The petitioner was among the other officials were found in possession of money.

The petitioner and the 11 other TASMAC staff have not satisfactorily accounted for the said amount the same was seized from them by the checking team. It was reported that a sum of Rs.20,000/- was seized from this petitioner. It is submitted that the money in possession of other 3 staff and another staff under suspension were returned to them by the checking team as the other three staff have satisfactorily accounted for their respective money.

8. It is submitted that on 03.07.2019, on receipt of a complaint from the District Inspection Cell Officer, Chennai District, a case has been registered by Vigilance & Anti Corruption, CC-I, against the petitioners and others as Cr. No.10/AC/2019/CC-I u/s. 12 Cr.P.C. Subsequently, the original FIR along with complaint and proceedings were submitted before the Hon'ble Special Court for Cases under Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, Chennai and the copies of the same were forwarded to the officers concerned.

9. It is submitted that acting upon the direction from the Additional Chief Secretary to Government vide letter No.20825/H.P & E (VI) 2019-I dated 05.08.2019 on the above surprise check and subsequent proceedings, first respondent had passed the impugned order under reference RC No.M3/6518/2019 dated 20.08.2019 and sent the same to the District Managers, Chennai Region to post 11 staff of TASMAC shops including the petitioner herein to be posted in the respective depots of the District on Administrative grounds citing the surprise check conducted on 11.02.2019 as mentioned above.

10. It is submitted that the petitioner has made averments and allegations against the respondents in his affidavit which are to be raised when he is facing trial in the criminal case in Cr.No.10/AC/2019/CC-I u/s.012 Cr.P.C.

11. The petitioner simply seeks to quash transfer order of the first respondent without any justification. The Respondent has rightly passed the impugned order after carefully going through the proceedings of the Joint surprise checking team and subsequent filing of criminal case against the petitioner and others. Further, the transfer order would enable the DVAC to conduct a free and fair enquiry. Hence, this writ petition is mere misuse of the legal process, and the same deserves to be

dismissed on the face of it, in lumine.

6. The learned counsel appearing for the respondents would submit that the respondent has rightly passed the impugned order after carefully going through the proceedings of the Joint surprise checking team and subsequent filing of criminal case against the petitioner and others and hence, the relief sought for by the petitioner cannot be granted.

7. It is stated in the order that it is done on administrative ground. It is contended that the impugned order of transfer was illegal on the ground that the petitioner has committed misappropriation of Rs.20,000/- and a case was registered against the petitioner and thereafter, the transfer was made with malafide intention.

8. The grounds raised by the petitioner are not valid and it does not stand to scrutiny by this Court.

9. In this context, it is relevant to refer to two decisions of the Supreme Court. The first relates to E.P.Royappa Vs. State of Tamilnadu reported in 1974 (4) SCC 3. The relevant passages found in paras 91 and 92 are reproduced below:

"91....The only question before us is whether the action taken by the respondents includes any component of mala fides; whether hostility and malus animus against the petitioner were the operational cause of the transfer of the petitioner from the post of Chief Secretary.

92. Secondly, we must not also overlook that the burden of establishing mala fides is very heavy on the person who alleges it. The allegations of mala fides are often more easily made than proved, and the very seriousness of such allegations demands proof of a high order of credibility. Here the petitioner, who was himself once the Chief Secretary, has flung a series of charges of oblique conduct against the Chief Minister. That is in itself a rather extraordinary and unusual occurrence and if these charges are true, they are bound to shake the confidence of the people in the political custodians of power in the State, and therefore, the anxiety of the Court should be all the greater to insist on a high degree of proof. In this context it may be noted that top administrators are often required to do acts which affect others adversely but which are necessary in the execution of their duties. These acts may lend themselves to misconstruction and suspicion as to the bona fides of their author when the

full facts and surrounding circumstances are not known. The Court would, therefore, be slow to draw dubious inferences from incomplete facts placed before it by a party, particularly when the imputations are grave and they are made against the holder of an office which has a high responsibility in the administration. Such is the judicial perspective in evaluating charge of unworthy conduct against ministers and other high authorities, not because of any special status which they are supposed to enjoy, nor because they are highly placed in social life or administrative set up—these considerations are wholly irrelevant in judicial approach—but because otherwise, functioning effectively would become difficult in a democracy. It is from this standpoint that we must assess the merits of the allegations of mala fides made by the petitioner against the second respondent.”

10. The second decision relates to M.Sankaranarayanan, IAS Vs. State of Karnataka and others (1993) 1 SCC 54. The following passage found in para 12 is worthy of reproduction here:

“12.After considering the respective contentions of the learned counsels appearing for the parties, it appears to us that the appellant has not been able to lay any firm foundation warranting a finding that the impugned order of transfer was passed mala fide and/or for an oblique purpose in order to punish the appellant and/or to humiliate him. The pleadings of the appellant before the Central Administrative Tribunal only indicate that some of his suggestions in the matter of posting of senior bureaucratic officers of the State had not been accepted by the present Chief Minister of the State. Such facts alone do not constitute any foundation for a finding that because the appellant was not agreeable to oblige the Chief Minister by accepting all his suggestions and putting up notes to that effect, he had incurred the displeasure of the Chief Minister and the impugned orders had been passed not on administrative exigencies but only to malign the appellant and to humiliate him. It may not always be possible to demonstrate malice in fact with full and elaborate particulars and it may be permissible in an appropriate case to draw reasonable inference of mala fide from the facts pleaded and established. But such inference must be based on factual matrix and such factual matrix cannot remain in the realm of insinuation, surmise or conjecture. In the instance case, we are unable to find that there are sufficient materials from which a

reasonable inference of malice in fact for passing the impugned order of transfer can be drawn. It is an admitted position that the Chief Secretary and the Chief Minister had differences of opinion on a number of sensitive matters. If on that score, the Cabinet and the Chief Minister had taken a decision to relieve the appellant from the post of Chief Secretary and post a very senior officer of their confidence to the post of Chief Secretary, it cannot be held that such decision is per se illegal or beyond the administrative authority. The position in this regard has been well explained in Royappa case¹ by this Court."

11. Since the transfer was made on administrative grounds, the Court cannot go behind the said reason so long as the power has been exercised properly by the authorities. Even following of the guidelines are not required when transfer is made on administrative grounds.

12. As admittedly, since the petitioner belong to a State Service created under Article 309 of the Constitution of India and they are entitled to serve wherever a posting is given to them. Therefore, the basic question is whether the petitioner is entitled to resist an order of transfer or in the alternative, through the Court, can get the posting to a particular place in the absence of Rules. Under the Rules framed under Article 309 of the Constitution of India being a State Service, transfer is an incidence of service of any service personnel and unless the transfer is made on the ground of mala fide or for extraneous reasons, the Court cannot go behind the power of the authorities in effecting transfer.

13. In this context, it is necessary to refer to the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court reported in State of U.P. Vs. Siya Ram and another (2004 (7) SCC 405). In paragraph 5 observed as follows.

"5. The High Court while exercising jurisdiction under Articles 226 and 227 of the Constitution of India had gone into the question as to whether the transfer was in the interest of public service. That would essentially require factual adjudication and invariably depend upon peculiar facts and circumstances of the case concerned. No government servant or employee of a public undertaking has any legal right to be posted forever at any one particular place or place of his choice since transfer of a particular employee appointed to the class or category of transferable posts from one place to other is not only an

incident, but a condition of service, necessary too in public interest and efficiency in the public administration. Unless an order of transfer is shown to be an outcome of mala fide exercise or stated to be in violation of statutory provisions prohibiting any such transfer, the courts or the tribunals normally cannot interfere with such orders as a matter of routine, as though they were appellate authorities substituting their own decision for that of the employer/management, as against such orders passed in the interest of administrative exigencies of the service concerned. This position was highlighted by this Court in National Hydroelectric Power Corpn. Ltd. v. Shri Bhagwan¹."

14. Further, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in yet another decision reported in 2004 (11) SCC 402 (State of U.P. Vs. Gobardhan Lal), in paragraph 7 observed as follows:-

"7. It is too late in the day for any government servant to contend that once appointed or posted in a particular place or position, he should continue in such place or position as long as he desires. Transfer of an employee is not only an incident inherent in the terms of appointment but also implicit as an essential condition of service in the absence of any specific indication to the contra, in the law governing or conditions of service. Unless the order of transfer is shown to be an outcome of a mala fide exercise of power or violative of any statutory provision (an Act or rule) or passed by an authority not competent to do so, an order of transfer cannot lightly be interfered with as a matter of course or routine for any or every type of grievance sought to be made. Even administrative guidelines for regulating transfers or containing transfer policies at best may afford an opportunity to the officer or servant concerned to approach their higher authorities for redress but cannot have the consequence of depriving or denying the competent authority to transfer a particular officer/servant to any place in public interest and as is found necessitated by exigencies of service as long as the official status is not affected adversely and there is no infraction of any career prospects such as seniority, scale of pay and secured emoluments. This Court has often reiterated that the order of transfer made even in transgression of administrative guidelines cannot also be interfered with, as they do not confer any legally enforceable rights, unless, as noticed supra, shown to be vitiated by mala fides or is made in violation of any statutory provision."

15. In the absence of any valid legal grounds and factual pleadings regarding mala fides, the Writ petition deserves to be dismissed and accordingly, dismissed. No costs. Consequently, the connected miscellaneous petitions are closed.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

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To

- 1.The Managing Director,
Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation Ltd (TASMAC)
CMDA Tower-II, IV Floor,
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Chembarambakkam Village,
Thiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu-600 123.

+1cc to Mr.M.Johnkennedy, Advocate SR.83134

+1cc to Mr.M.Muthappan, Advocate SR.82498

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MG (CO)
CB(11/11/2019)

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