



BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED: 14.03.2022

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE S.M.SUBRAMANIAM

W.P(MD) .No.4448 of 2022

and

W.M.P (MD) Nos.3752 and 3753 of 2022

S.Subramanian @ Murugan

... Petitioner

Vs.

The Superintendent of Police,
Thoothukudi District,
Thoothukudi.

... Respondent

PRAYER: Writ Petition under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, to issue a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, calling for the entire records pertaining to the communication made in Na.Ka.A.5/27441/310/2020 and signed by the respondent on 07.01.2022 in connection with the recruitment of Grade II Police Constable that has been initiated during 2020 and quash the same and consequently direct the respondent to recruit the petitioner as a Grade II Police Constable on the basis of the marks obtained by the petitioner in the selection process.

For Petitioners : Mr.R.Anand

For Respondent : Mr.D.Sadiq Raja

Additional Government Pleader

ORDER

The order of rejection rejecting the candidature of the writ petitioner for selection to the post of Grade II Police Constable is under challenge in the present writ petition.

2.Pursuant to the recruitment notification for selection to the post of Grade II Police Constable, the petitioner participated in the process of selection. The petitioner was successfully written the examination and allowed to participate in the physical verification and endurance test. At the time of certificate verification, it was found that a criminal case was registered against the writ petitioner and the said information was suppressed by the petitioner in his application.

3.The learned counsel for the petitioner mainly contended that the said criminal case ended with an order of acquittal and the



offences were also not serious in nature. Therefore, the case of the writ petitioner is to be considered for selection.

4.First of all the case of the writ petitioner is because of suppression where he failed to mention the registration of a criminal case against him in the application submitted, pursuant to the recruitment notification. Secondly, an acquittal in the criminal case is not a bar for the authorities competent to verify the eligibility and suitability of the candidate for recruitment to the post of Grade II Police Constable. Grade II Police Constable is a uniformed service and they have to deal with arms and ammunitions. Therefore, verification of antecedents, character eligibility and suitability are all paramount importance. Mere acquittal in a criminal case or even if there is no case against the candidate, the Selection Committee is empowered to assess the eligibility and suitability.

5.In the present case, the petitioner has suppressed the criminal case and further, the learned Additional Government Pleader brought to the notice of this Court that the order of acquittal was granted on benefit of doubt and therefore, the authorities have formed an opinion that the petitioner is not eligible and suitable for selection to the post of Grade II Police Constable. The principles regarding the selection has already been settled by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of **Union Territory, Chandigarh Administration and Others vs. Pradeep Kumar and Another** reported in 2018(1) SCC 797.

6.This apart, the Full Bench of Madhya Pradesh High Court elaborately considered the issues with reference to the selection and the power of the Selection Committee and the relevant portions are extracted hereunder:

33.This brings us to consider the Question Nos.2 and 3 referred to for the opinion, which read as under:-

QUESTION Nos.2 & 3

"2. Whether the High Court in exercise of its powers under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, can step into the shoes of the Appointing Authority and determine as to whether the person concerned is fit for appointment or whether the High Court on finding that the Authority concerned has wrongly exercised its discretion in holding the candidate to be ineligible should, after quashing the order, remit the matter back to the authority concerned for reconsideration or for fresh consideration as to the eligibility of the person?

3. Whether the High Court while allowing such a petition in exercise of its powers under Article 226 of the Constitution of India can issue a further direction to the authority to appoint the person concerned on the post from the date his batchmates were appointed and to grant him back



dated seniority and all other benefits or whether the High Court should simply remit the matter back to the authority for taking a decision in this regard?"

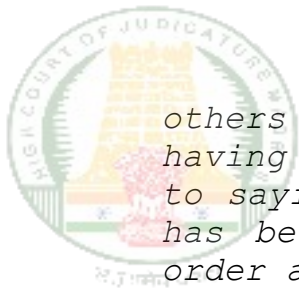
34. The power of judicial review under Article 226 of the Constitution of India is not that as of Court of appeal but to find out whether the decision-making process is in accordance with law and is not arbitrary or irrational. In a Constitution Bench judgment reported as MANU/SC/0098/1954 : AIR 1954 SC 440 (T.C. Basappa vs. T. Nagappa and another) it was held that the High Court has power to issue writs in a case where subordinate tribunals or bodies or officers act wholly without jurisdiction or in excess of it or in violation of the principles of natural justice, or refuse to exercise a jurisdiction vested in them or there is an error apparent on the face of record but such jurisdiction is not wide or large as to enable the High Court to convert itself into a Court of appeal and examine for itself the correctness of the decision impugned. Relevant extract of the said decision is reproduced as under:-

"(11) In dealing with the powers of the High Court under article 226 of the Constitution this Court has expressed itself in almost similar terms vide - 'Veerappa Pillai vs. Raman and Raman Ltd., MANU/SC/0057/1952 : AIR 1952 SC 192 at pp. 195-196 (I) and said:

"Such writs as are referred to in article 226 are obviously intended to enable the High Court to issue them in grave cases where the subordinate Tribunals or bodies or officers act wholly without jurisdiction, or in excess of it, or in violation of the principles of natural justice, or refuse to exercise a jurisdiction, vested in them, or there is an error apparent on the face of the record, and such act, omission, error or excess has resulted in manifest injustice. However extensive the jurisdiction may be, it seems to us that it is not so wide or large as to enable the High Court to convert itself into a Court of appeal and examine for itself the correctness of the decision impugned and decide what is the proper view to be taken or the order to be made."

These passages indicate with sufficient fullness the general principles that govern the exercise of jurisdiction in the matter of granting writs of certiorari under article 226 of the Constitution.

(24). As regards the omission to include hiring charges the High Court has observed that the Tribunal did not record any finding that such hiring was proved. The Tribunal has in fact found that as regards some cars they were hired, while



others had been taken on loan, the money value for their use having been paid by the first respondent which is tantamount to saying that he had to pay the hiring charges. The matter has been dealt with in paragraph 29(d) of the Tribunal's order and the entire evidence has been gone through.

We are unable to say that the finding of the Tribunal that the respondent No. 1 had omitted to include in his return of election expenses the dinner and hotel charges is a finding unsupported by any evidence. Reference may be made in this connection to paragraph 29(f) of the Tribunal's order which deals with the matter in detail. On the whole our opinion is that the so-called apparent errors pointed out by the High Court are neither errors of law nor do they appear on the face of the record. An appellate Court might have on a review of this evidence come to a different conclusion but these are not matters which would justify the issue of a writ of certiorari. In our opinion the judgment of the High Court cannot be supported and this appeal must be allowed. The writ issued by the High Court will therefore be vacated. We make no order as to costs of this appeal."

35. In another Constitution Bench judgment reported as MANU/SC/0364/1964 : AIR 1965 SC 532 (State of Mysore and another vs. K.N. Chandrasekhara), the question examined was in relation to the appointment to the post of Munsif by the Karnataka Public Service Commission. The Court held that if the High Court was satisfied that the persons, who were occupying the post were appointed contrary to the Rules, the High Court could set aside the proceedings of the Commission and direct preparation of fresh list according to law but could not direct to include the name of the six petitioners only because they applied to the Court. The relevant extract read as under:-

"10. It may at once be observed that the order passed by the High Court cannot in any view of the case be sustained. The High Court could, if it held that the notification issued by the Commission and the appointments made by the State pursuant thereto were made in violation of the statutory rules, quash the list but the High Court could not direct that the names of six persons merely because they had applied for setting aside the list of candidates selected for promotion be incorporated in that list. The direction made by the High Court was in the nature of mandamus. Such a direction could be issued against a person or body to compel the performance of a public duty imposed upon it by law - statutory or common. The commission is undoubtedly a body constituted pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution and has to exercise powers and perform functions entrusted to it by the Rules framed under Art.



309. But the order which the High Court made was not for compelling performance of its duty imposed upon the Commission by statute or common law. If the High Court came to the conclusion that the proceeding of the Commission was vitiated on account of some irregularity or illegality, it could declare the proceeding void. The High Court however held that the orders including respondents 4 to 13 to the petitions in the list of persons eligible for appointment should be allowed to stand, because the petitioners in the petitions before it did not insist on the issue of a writ of quo warranto. If the High Court was satisfied on an application specifically made in that behalf that the persons who were occupying posts to which they were appointed contrary to the rules governing the appointment and consequently were not competent to occupy the posts, it is difficult to appreciate the ground on which the High Court would be justified in declining to pass appropriate orders. Either the High Court could set aside the proceeding of the Commission and direct preparation of a fresh list according to law, or the High Court could dismiss the petitions because in its view the list was regularly prepared. But the order passed by the High Court maintaining the inclusion of respondents 4 to 13 in the list and then directing the Commission to include the names of the six petitioners in the list merely because they had applied to the High Court is without authority."

36. In another judgment reported as 1969 (3) SCC 489 (Thakur Birendra Singh vs. The State of M.P. and others), the Court held that the High Court could have quashed the orders but the High Court was not sitting in appeal over the decision of the Board of Revenue. Once the orders complained of are quashed, the matter should have been left at large without any further direction leaving the Revenue Authorities free to take any steps.

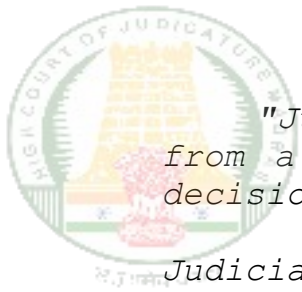
37. The scope of power of judicial review has also been examined in a judgment reported as MANU/SC/0002/1996 : (1994) 6 SCC 651 (Tata Cellular vs. Union of India), the Supreme Court held as under:-

"74. Judicial review is concerned with reviewing not the merits of the decision in support of which the application for judicial review is made, but the decision-making process itself.

7 5 . In Chief Constable of the North Wales Police v. Evans

MANU/UKHL/0007/1982 : (1982) 3 All ER 141, 154, Lord Brightman said:

<https://hcservices.ecourts.gov.in/hcservices/>



"Judicial review, as the words imply, is not an appeal from a decision, but a review of the manner in which the decision was made.

Judicial review is concerned, not with the decision, but with the decision-making process. Unless that restriction on the power of the court is observed, the court will in my view, under the guise of preventing the abuse of power, be itself guilty of usurping power."

In the same case Lord Hailsham commented on the purpose of the remedy by way of judicial review under RSC, Ord. 53 in the following terms:

"This remedy, vastly increased in extent, and rendered, over a long period in recent years, of infinitely more convenient access than that provided by the old prerogative writs and actions for a declaration, is intended to protect the individual against the abuse of power by a wide range of authorities, judicial, quasi-judicial, and, as would originally have been thought when I first practiced at the Bar, administrative. It is not intended to take away from those authorities the powers and discretions properly vested in them by law and to substitute the courts as the bodies making the decisions. It is intended to see that the relevant authorities use their powers in a proper manner (p. 1160)."

In *R. v. Panel on Takeovers and Mergers, exp Datafin plc* MANU/UKWA/0092/1986 : (1987) 1 All ER 564, Sir John Donaldson, M.R.

"An application for judicial review is not an appeal." In *Lonrho plc v. Secretary of State for Trade and Industry* MANU/UKHL/0039/1989 : (1989) 2 All ER 609, Lord Keith said: "Judicial review is a protection and not a weapon."

It is thus different from an appeal. When hearing an appeal the Court is concerned with the merits of the decision under appeal. In *Amin v. Entry Clearance Officer*, MANU/UKHL/0040/1983 : (1983) 2 All ER 864, Re, Lord Fraser observed that:

"Judicial review is concerned not with the merits of a decision but with the manner in which the decision was made.... Judicial review is entirely different from an ordinary appeal. It is made effective by the court quashing the administrative decision without substituting its own decision, and is to be contrasted with an appeal where the appellate tribunal substitutes its own decision on the merits for that of the administrative officer."

7 6 . In *R. v. Panel on Take-overs and Mergers, exp in*



Guinness plc MANU/UKWA/0092/1986 : (1989) 1 All ER 509, Lord Donaldson, M.R. referred to the judicial review jurisdiction as being supervisory or 'longstop' jurisdiction. Unless that restriction on the power of the court is observed, the court will, under the guise of preventing the abuse of power, be itself guilty of usurping power.

77. The duty of the court is to confine itself to the question of legality. Its concern should be:

1. Whether a decision-making authority exceeded its powers?
2. Committed an error of law,
3. committed a breach of the rules of natural justice,
- 4 . reached a decision which no reasonable tribunal would have reached or,
5. abused its powers.

Therefore, it is not for the court to determine whether a particular policy or particular decision taken in the fulfillment of that policy is fair. It is only concerned with the manner in which those decisions have been taken. The extent of the duty to act fairly will vary from case to case. Shortly put, the grounds upon which an administrative action is subject to control by judicial review can be classified as under:

(i) Illegality : This means the decision-maker must understand

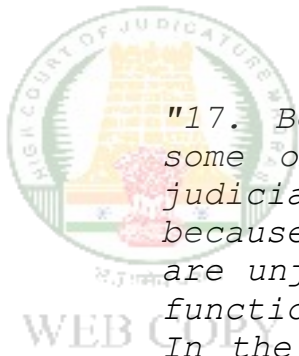
correctly the law that regulates his decision-making power and must give effect to it.

(ii) Irrationality, namely, Wednesbury unreasonableness.

(iii) Procedural impropriety.

The above are only the broad grounds but it does not rule out addition of further grounds in course of time. As a matter of fact, in R. v. Secretary of State for the Home Department, ex Brind MANU/UKHL/0008/1991 : (1991) 1 ACR 696, Lord Diplock refers specifically to one development, namely, the possible recognition of the principle of proportionality. In all these cases the test to be adopted is that the court should, "consider whether something has gone wrong of a nature and degree which requires its intervention".

38. The Supreme Court in a judgment reported as MANU/SC/4463/2007 : (2008) 1 SCC 683 (Aravali Golf Club vs. Chander Hass) has held that in the name of judicial activism Judges cannot cross their limits and try to take over functions which belong to another organ of the State. The Court held as under:-



"17. Before parting with this case we would like to make some observations about the limits of the powers of the judiciary. We are compelled to make these observations because we are repeatedly coming across cases where judges are unjustifiably trying to perform executive or legislative functions. In our opinion this is clearly unconstitutional. In the name of judicial activism judges cannot cross their limits and try to take over functions which belong to another organ of the State.

18. Judges must exercise judicial restraint and must not encroach into the executive or legislative domain, vide Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Ltd. v. Workmen MANU/SC/4993/2006 : (2007) 1 SCC 408; and S.C. Chandra v. State of Jharkhand MANU/SC/3501/2007 : (2007) 8 SCC 279 (see concurring judgment of M. Katju, J.).

19. Under our Constitution, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary all have their own broad spheres of operation. Ordinarily it is not proper for any of these three organs of the State to encroach upon the domain of another, otherwise the delicate balance in the Constitution will be upset, and there will be a reaction.

20. Judges must know their limits and must not try to run the Government. They must have modesty and humility, and not behave like emperors. There is broad separation of powers under the Constitution and each organ of the State - the legislature, the executive and the judiciary - must have respect for the other and must not encroach into each other's domains.

21 . The theory of separation of powers first propounded by the French thinker Montesquieu (in his book The Spirit of Laws) broadly holds the field in India too. In Chapter XI of his book The Spirit of Laws Montesquieu writes:

"When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of Magistrates, there can be no liberty; because apprehensions may arise, lest the same monarch or senate should enact tyrannical laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner.

Again, there is no liberty, if the judicial power be not separated from the legislative and executive. Were it joined with the legislative, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control; for the judge would be then the legislator. Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with violence and oppression.

There would be an end of everything, were the same man or the

same body, whether of the nobles or of the people, to



exercise those three powers, that of enacting laws, that of executing the public resolutions, and of trying the causes of individuals."

(Emphasis supplied)

We fully agree with the view expressed above. Montesquieu's warning in the passage above quoted is particularly apt and timely for the Indian judiciary today, since very often it is rightly criticised for "overreach" and encroachment into the domain of the other two organs."

39. A Full Bench of this Court in Writ Appeal No. 581/2017 (Nitin Pathak vs. State of M.P. and others) examined the question as to whether in exercise of power of judicial review the Court can refer the matter to a Court chosen expert or whether the Court itself can act as Court of appeal and make a different view than what has been finalised as the model answer key by the Examining Body. The Bench held as under:-

"32. In respect of the second question, this Court does not and should not act as Court of Appeal in the matter of opinion of experts in academic matters as the power of judicial review is concerned, not with the decision, but with the decision-making process. The Court should not under the guise of preventing the abuse of power be itself guilty of usurping power."

40. In view of the law laid down in above said judgments, there is no doubt that in exercise of power of judicial review under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, this Court only examines the decision-making process and does not substitute itself as a Court of appeal over the reasons recorded by the State Government. We find that the decision of the State Government holding that the petitioner is not suitable, is just, fair and reasonable keeping in view the nature of the post and the duties to be discharged.

41 . Even if the High Court finds that the decision of the State Government is suffering from some illegality, the jurisdiction of the High Court in a writ petition under Article 226 of the Constitution of India is to remit the matter to the Authority for reconsideration rather than to substitute the decision of the competent Authority with that of its own. The Supreme Court in a judgment reported as MANU/SC/0732/1994 : (1994) 4 SCC 448 (State of Haryana vs. Naresh Kumar Bali) was examining a question: as to whether there could be a direction to appoint a candidate, who sought appointment on compassionate ground. The Supreme Court held as under:-

"16. With regard to appointment on compassionate ground we have set out the law in Life Insurance Corpn. of India v.



Asha Ramchandra Ambekar MANU/SC/0453/1994 : (1994) 2 SCC 718. The same principle will clearly apply here. What the High Court failed to note is the post of an Inspector is a promotional post. The issuing a direction to appoint the respondent within

three months when direct recruitment is not available, is unsupportable. The High Court could have merely directed consideration of the claim of the respondent in accordance with the rules. It cannot direct appointment. Such a direction does not fall within the scope of mandamus. Judicial review, it has been repeatedly emphasised, is directed against the decision-making process and not against the decision itself; and it is no part of the court's duty to exercise the power of the authorities itself. There is widespread misconception on the scope of interference in judicial review. The exercise of the extraordinary jurisdiction constitutionally conferred on the Apex Court under Article 142(1) of the Constitution can be of no guidance on the scope of Article 226."

42. Again while considering the question of compassionate appointment in a judgment reported as MANU/SC/3729/2008 : (2008) 8 SCC 475 (General Manager, State Bank of India and others vs. Anju Jain), the Supreme Court held that there could not be any direction for appointment or promotion. The relevant para of the said decision is extracted as under:-

"37. Even on second ground, the submission of the Bank is well-founded. As noted earlier, the learned Single Judge issued direction to the Bank to appoint the writ petitioner, widow of the deceased employee within one month. As per settled law, a writ of mandamus can be issued directing the authority to consider the case of the petitioner for an appointment or promotion as the case may be but no direction can be given to appoint or promote a person."

43. Similar view has been expressed in a judgment reported as MANU/SC/1149/2013 : (2014) 3 SCC 767 (Ganapath Singh Gangaram Singh Rajput vs. Gulbarga University represented by its Registrar and others) wherein while dealing with the scope of Writ of Mandamus in the matter of appointment/recruitment, the Supreme Court held,thus:-

"25. Ordinarily, in a case where the person appointed is found ineligible, this Court after setting aside such appointment, directs for consideration of cases of such of the candidates, who have been found eligible. It is only in exceptional cases that this Court issues mandamus for appointment. The case in hand is not one of those cases where the High Court ought to have issued mandamus for appointment of Shivanand as Lecturer in MCA. Hence, we are of the opinion that the High Court rightly held Ganpat



ineligible and quashed his appointment. However, it erred in issuing mandamus for appointment of Shivanand. Accordingly, we uphold the impugned order (Shivanand v. Gulbarga University, Writ Appeal No. 3216 of 2004, order dated 19-11-2009/24-11-2009 (KAR) of the High Court whereby it had set aside the appointment of the appellant herein and direct that the case of the writ petitioner Shivanand and all other candidates be considered in accordance with law. However, we make it clear that the selection already made shall be taken to its logical conclusion."

44 . Therefore, the High Court could not issue any direction for appointment of a candidate from the date the other candidates were appointed as such is not the jurisdiction vested in the High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution of India.

45. In view of the above, we find that the judgment of this Court in Arvind Gurjar's case (supra) does not lay down the correct law as the High Court has substituted its decision regarding suitability of a candidate and also issued a direction to appoint the petitioner, therefore, the entire judgment does not lay down correct law and is thus, overruled. The question Nos. 2 and 3 are answered accordingly.

QUESTION No. 6:

(6) Any other question that may arise for adjudication or decision in the dispute involved in the present petition and which the Larger Bench thinks appropriate to decide?"

7. In view of the facts and circumstances, this Court is of the considered opinion that the petitioner was not selected on account of the fact that he has suppressed the fact regarding the registration of a criminal case and further on verification of the antecedents, the authorities found that he is not eligible and suitable for the said post. This Court cannot interfere with such findings of the authority. Accordingly, this Writ Petition stands dismissed. No costs. Consequently, connected miscellaneous petitions are closed.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar (T&P)

// True Copy //

/ /2022

Sub Assistant Registrar(CS)



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To

1 The Superintendent of Police,
Thoothukudi District,
Thoothukudi.

2 The Additional Public Prosecutor,
Madurai Bench of Madras High Court, Madurai.

+1 CC to M/s.SPL GP (SR-12202[F] dated 15/03/2022)

ORDER MADE IN
W.P (MD) .No.4448 of 2022
and
W.M.P (MD) Nos.3752 and 3753 of 2022
14.03.2022

PKP/28.03.2022/12P/4C