



W.P.No.21578 of



IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 13.09.2024

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE VIVEK KUMAR SINGH

W.P.No.21578 of 2022 and
W.M.P.No.20595 of 2022

V.Lakshmanan

... Petitioner

Vs.

1.The Government of Tamil Nadu,
Rep by its Principal Secretary to Government,
Environment and Forest Department,
Fort St. George, Secretariat,
Chennai 600 009.

2.The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests,
Head of Forest Force,
No.1, Genies Road,
Panagal Maligai,
Saidapet, Chennai 15.

3.The Conservator of Forests,
Vellore Forest Region,
Vellore, Vellore District.

4.The District Forest Officer,
Vellore Forest Division,
Vellore District.

... Respondents



Prayer: Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, to issue a Writ of Certiorarified Mandamus, to call for the records of the impugned order passed by the second respondent dated 04.07.2022 made in Ref.No.LL1/4196/2022 and quash the same, consequently direct the respondents to include the petitioner's name (V.Lakshmanan) in the Statewide Seniority List of Plot Watchers/ Social Forestry Workers in the Forest Department and appointing him as Forest Watcher on par with similarly persons with all service benefits as granted to other similarly placed persons.

For Petitioner : Mr.M.R.Jothimanian

For Respondents : Mr.R.Murthi, GA

ORDER

This Writ Petition has been filed by the petitioner for quashment of the impugned order passed by the second respondent dated 04.07.2022 made in Ref.No.LL1/4196/2022 and consequently to direct the respondents to include the petitioner's name (V.Lakshmanan) in the Statewide Seniority List of Plot Watchers/ Social Forestry Workers in the Forest Department and appointing him as Forest Watcher on par with similar persons with all service benefits as granted to other similarly placed persons.



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2. The case of the petitioner is that he was appointed as Plot Watcher on 01.10.1991. He is working for more than 30 years without any adverse remarks and to the satisfaction of the respondents.

3. The recommendation was made by the fourth respondent herein to include the petitioner's name in the Statewide Seniority List, but the second respondent has not considered his claim and in the mean time, the Government issued G.O.No. 95 dated 07.08.2009 to regularise the service of the plot watcher and village social forest workers, who all are working with the Department for more than 10 years and their service has to be regularised in the supernumerary post. Hence, it is the grievance of the petitioner that benefits of G.O.No.95 should be given to him, as he is working for more than 30 years and his name was also forwarded to the second respondent in the year 2015 by the fourth respondent herein and the same is pending with the second respondent.

4. Though similarly placed persons' services had been regularised and were appointed as Plot Watchers in the supernumerary post as per G.O.Ms.No. 95 and the order passed by this Court in various writ petitions



filed by plot watchers/village Social Forest Workers, the petitioner's service has not been regularised by the respondents. Hence, the present writ petition has been filed.

5. The very same issue was already dealt with by this Court in W.P.No. 20854 of 2012 in the case of ***P.Rajendran Vs The Government of Tamil Nadu rep by its Principal Secretary to Government*** and the relevant paragraphs are extracted hereunder for useful reference;

“4. While matter stood thus, the Government has issued another Government Order in G.O.Ms.No. 95 Environment and Forest (FR.2) Department dated 07.08.2009 to regularise the services of all Plot Watchers/Social Forest Workers who were working in the Department for more than ten years and the petitioner's name was also recommended and forwarded to the second respondent by the fourth respondent in 2009 but the same has been kept pending. The petitioner had also made a representation on 28.08.2011 to the first and second respondents and there was no action forthcoming for regularising the services inspite of the fact that the petitioner has rendered more than ten years of service as Plot Watcher. According to the petitioner, if the initial date of his appointment is taken into consideration he had rendered more than 28 years of service till the date of filing of the writ petition, ignoring the break in



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service, which was not attributable to the petitioner as his services came to be discontinued only for paucity of funds and for nonavailability of the project. According to the petitioner, other persons who are similarly placed like the petitioner, whose services had been regularised in terms of G.O.Ms.No. 95 Environment and Forest (FR.2) Department dated 07.08.2009 in compliance with the various orders passed by this Court in several writ petitions. Since his name was recommended by the competent authority for regularisation of his service, the petitioner does not see any impediment for grant of relief to him, however, for some strange reason, no decision has been taken by the first and second respondents in regularising his services.

5. Upon notice, Mr.M.Santhanaraman, learned Additional Government Pleader entered appearance on behalf of the respondents and filed counter affidavit resisting the claim of the petitioner. According to the counter affidavit, it is stated that the services of the petitioner could not be regularised when similar names were considered in 1989 and during that crucial period, the petitioner absconded and left the service and re-entered the service only on 1 st April 2002. Moreover, it is stated in the counter affidavit that the petitioner had completed only 9 years and 5 months as on 30.01.2009 after ten years break of service and therefore, the case could not be considered along with other persons whose services were ultimately came to be regularised by the application of the above said Government Orders.



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6. *Rebutting the averments contained in the counter affidavit, a reply statement has been filed on behalf of the petitioner that discontinuance of his service from 1989 till 1st April 2002 was not due to the conduct of the petitioner but it was only because of the fact of non-availability of funds and the project and therefore, such break ought to have been condoned and the services ought to have been construed to be as continuous with effect from the date when he was originally appointed in 1984. Learned counsel appearing for the petitioner would specifically draw this Court's attention to the proceedings of the second respondent dated 18.09.2009, in which, in para 1, it is clearly stated that the persons whose services had been discontinued due to paucity of funds, such break had to be condoned and need not be considered as ineligible for the purpose of completion of ten years of service. In view of the proceedings which clearly stipulates that such break in service shall not be considered as one of break in service for the purpose of counting the completion of ten years of service as contemplated in the above said Government Orders, the petitioner's services ought to have been regularised as was done in the case of similarly placed persons. Learned counsel appearing for the petitioner would also draw this Court's attention to para 6 of the G.O.Ms.No.95 Environment and Forest (FR.2) Department dated 07.08.2009 wherein more than 3000 daily wage employees were working as Plot Watchers have been*



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brought on the regular time scale by creating supernumerary posts from the date of issue of the Government Order. Therefore, he would pray for allowing the writ petition as otherwise the petitioner would be deprived of his right to seek parity in the matter of regularisation of his services.

7. This Court has considered the rival submission of the learned counsels after perusing the records and the pleadings.

8. While considering the objections putforth by the respondents, this Court is of the view that the discontinuance of the petitioner for the period from 1989 till 01.04.2002 was not due to the conduct of the petitioner or his absence on his own volition but because of the non-availability of funds and the project. This fact which was highlighted in the reply statement has not been disputed by the respondents. In the said circumstances, the contention of the respondents that the petitioner did not complete ten years of service cannot be countenanced both on facts and in law. That being the case, the claim of the petitioner squarely falls within the frame work of G.O.Ms.No. 95 Environment and Forest (FR.2) Department dated 07.08.2009 and also other Government Orders, which are referred to supra. While holding so, this Court has no hesitation to grant the mandamus sought for in the writ petition.

9. In the said circumstances, there shall be a direction to the respondents to include the name of the petitioner in the state wide seniority list and regularise the services by appointing him



as Forest Watcher by creating a supernumerary post in case of non-availability of vacancy in terms of G.O.Ms.No. 95 Environment and Forest (FR.2) Department dated 07.08.2009 with all other attendant and consequential benefits as granted to other similarly placed persons. The said exercise shall be initiated and completed by the respondents within a period of three months from the date of receipt of a copy of this order.

*10. The writ petition stands allowed on the above terms.
No costs. ”*

6. In view of the above decision, wherein this Court had considered the similar issue, there shall be a direction to the respondents to include the name of the petitioner in the State Wide Seniority List and regularise his services by appointing him as Forest Watcher by creating a supernumerary post in the case of non-availability of vacancy in terms of G.O.Ms.No. 95 Environment and Forest (FR.2) Department dated 07.08.2009.

7. Accordingly, the present writ petition stands allowed. No costs.
Consequently, connected Miscellaneous Petition is closed.

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Index : Yes / No
Speaking order / Non-speaking order



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To

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- 1.The Principal Secretary to Government,
Environment and Forest Department,
Fort St. George, Secretariat,
Chennai 600 009.
- 2.The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests,
Head of Forest Force,
No.1, Genies Road,
Panagal Maligai,
Saidapet, Chennai 15.
- 3.The Conservator of Forests,
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Vellore, Vellore District.
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VIVEK KUMAR SINGH, J.

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