



W.P No.19355 of 2015

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED: 24.01.2025

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE **P.DHANABAL**

W.P.No.19355 of 2013

and MP.No.2 of 2013 and MP.Nos.1 & 2 of 2014

Chief Executive Officer,
District Forest Officer,
Sandalwood Industrial Complex,
Tirupattur 635 601.

.. Petitioner

Vs.

- 1.Mallika
- 2.Rathinammal
- 3.Vasanth
- 4.K.Vijaya
- 5.Pachaiyammal
- 6.R.Selvi
- 7.Jothi
- 8.Lakshmi
- 9.Kamala
- 10.Chinnakannu
- 11.M.Rani
- 12.Karporavalli
- 13.Banu
- 14.Krishnaveni
- 15.M.Neela
- 16.K.Rani
- 17.P.Vanitha
- 18.Padma



W.P No.19355 of 2015

19.The Presiding Officer,
Labour Court, Vellore.

.. Respondents

WEB COPY

Prayer: Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, pleaded to issue a Writ of Certiorari, calling for the records in C.P.No.02 of 2012 in I.D.Nos.15 to 34 & 36 of 1999 dated 21.11.2012, before the Labour Court, Vellore and quash the same.

For Petitioner : Mr.R.Murthi,
Government Advocate
For Respondents : Mr.S.T.Varadarajulu
for R1 to R18
Court - R19

ORDER

This writ petition has been challenged against the order passed by the Labour Court, Vellore in C.P.No.02 of 2012 in I.D.Nos.15 to 34 & 36 of 1999 dated 21.11.2012 and quash the same.

2. The short facts necessary to dispose of this Writ petition are as follows:-

The respondents were engaged as Grade III female mazdoors in the Additional Sandalwood Depot, Tirupattur on daily wages. Their wages were paid at the rates fixed by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests/Conservator of Forests, which are equal to the rates fixed by the



W.P No.19355 of 2015

Labour and Employment Department for the Sandalwood Depot workers.

They worked on working days in the Depot between 8.30 a.m to 1.00 p.m and 1.30 p.m to 5.00 p.m and they were paid on a muster roll. The workmen were not appointed in the sanctioned post, but they were engaged as casual labourers and were paid accordingly. In view of the ban on export of sandalwood imposed by the Central Government and due to a major fire accident that occurred on 16.03.1997 in the Additional Sandalwood Depot, resulting in heavy loss and the closing down of the Additional depot, the writ petitioner were unable to afford work for the workmen, and they were stopped since 10.09.1997. Therefore, the workmen raised an industrial dispute in I.D.Nos.15 to 34 & 36 of 1999 before the Labour Court, Vellore to reinstate them with full back wages and continuity of service. The Labour Court allowed the claim petition and passed orders to re-instate the workmen with full back wages, continuity of service and all other monetary benefits, and the said order has not been challenged by the writ petitioner.

2.1. According to the writ petitioner, the Forest Department cannot be termed as an industry within the meaning of the Industrial



W.P No.19355 of 2015

Dispute Act, and the workmen are not workmen as per the definition of the Act. Therefore, the Labour Court ought not to have entertained the Industrial Dispute against the writ petitioner. Moreover, the workmen were stopped due to a major fire accident and non availability of stock. Thereafter, the writ petitioner preferred W.P.No.3476 of 2001, and the said writ petition was dismissed. The Writ Appeal was also filed in W.A.No.581 of 2010 and the same was also dismissed, confirming the order of the Labour Court. Thereafter, the matter was taken to the Hon'ble Supreme Court through SLP.Nos.12381 to 12402 of 2012, which was converted to Civil Appeal Nos.1311 to 1332 of 2013 and the same is pending before the Supreme Court of India. In the meantime, the deceased workmen have filed the computation petition in C.P.No.02 of 2012, which was allowed by the Labour Court, directing the respondent to pay to each of the petitioners Rs.90,000/- within a period of 3 months from the date of the order, failing which, it shall carry 9% interest per annum. Challenging the said order passed in the computation petition, the present writ petition has been filed by the writ petitioner.

3. The learned counsel appearing for the writ petitioner would



W.P No.19355 of 2015

submit that the workmen were engaged as casual labourers in the Additional Sandalwood Depot on the daily wages. Thereafter, due to a major fire accident on 16.03.1997, the Additional Sandalwood Depot in Tirupathur was closed, and the workmen were stopped from working since 10.09.1997. Therefore, the workmen raised industrial dispute in I.D.Nos.15 to 34 & 36 of 1999 before the Labour Court, Vellore and the Labour Court allowed the claim petition to reinstate the petitioners with full back wages, continuity of services, and all other monetary benefits. Thereafter the said award was challenged through W.P.No.3476 of 2001 and the same was dismissed, confirming the order of the Labour Court through an order dated 01.12.2009. Thereafter W.A.No.581 of 2010 was preferred, and the same was also dismissed, confirming the order of the Writ Court. Thereafter, the writ petitioner herein preferred SLP, and the same was converted into Civil Appeal Nos.1311 to 1332 of 2013 and the same are pending before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. Meanwhile, the workmen filed a computation petition in C.P.No.02 of 2012 before the Labour Court and the Labour Court allowed the petition with a direction to the writ petitioner to pay a sum of Rs.90,000/- to each of the petitioners, within 3 months from the date of order, failing which,



W.P No.19355 of 2015

it shall carry 9% interest per annum. Therefore, they are now challenging the computation petition through this writ petition. In fact, the applicability of the Industrial Dispute Act itself is being challenged by the writ petitioner, and the same is pending for adjudication before the Hon'ble Supreme Court. However, the computation petition was allowed by the Labour Court. Therefore, the order passed by the Labour Court in the computation petition is liable to be set aside.

4. The learned counsel appearing for the respondents would submit that the workmen were working under the writ petitioner's sandalwood depot, and they were denied work, thereby they raised an industrial dispute in I.D.Nos.15 to 34 & 36 of 1999 and the same was allowed. As per the order of the Labour Court, the writ petitioner management have to reinstate the writ petitioners with full back wages and continuity of services and all other monetary benefits. The said order of the Labour Court was challenged by the management writ petitioner, and the same was dismissed. A writ appeal was also preferred by the writ petitioner management, and the same was also dismissed and thereafter they preferred Civil Appeal Nos.1311 to 1332 of 2013 before



W.P No.19355 of 2015

the Hon'ble Supreme Court and it is also pending for adjudication. The main contention of the writ petitioner is that the Forest Department does not come under the definition of an industry, and thereby, the Industrial Dispute Act does not apply to them. However, there is no stay order passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, therefore, the writ petitioners are entitled to the benefits of the order of the Labour Court, and thereby they filed a petition for computation and the same was also allowed, and the Labour Court computed the amount of Rs.90,000/- to each of the petitioners and directed payment within a period of three months, failing which, 9% interest will be computed on the amount. Therefore, the order of the Labour Court is based on the main industrial dispute. Hence, the present writ petition is liable to be dismissed.

5. This Court heard both sides and perused the materials available on record.

6. In this case, there is no dispute that the workmen were engaged as Grade III female mazdoors in the Additional Sandalwood Depot at Tirupathur and due to a major fire accident, the writ petitioner



W.P No.19355 of 2015

was unable to afford work to the workmen, and they were stopped from work since 10.09.1997. Challenging the denial of employment, the workmen raised an industrial dispute in I.D.Nos.15 to 34 & 36 of 1999 before the Labour Court, Vellore and the same was allowed, directing the writ petitioner management to reinstate the workmen with full back wages and continuity of services and all other monetary benefits. Thereafter, the said order was challenged through W.P.No.3476 of 2001, and the same was dismissed on 01.12.2009, by confirming the order of the Labour Court. The order of writ petitioner was challenged through W.A.No.581 of 2010 and the same was also dismissed. Against which, the Forest Department preferred SLP before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, which has now been converted into Civil Appeal Nos.1311 to 1332 of 2013 and the same are pending before the Supreme Court. All the above said facts are admitted by both the parties. In the meantime, the workmen filed a computation petition before the Labour Court and the Labour Court also computed the amount and directed the writ petitioner management to pay a sum of Rs.90,000/- to each of the petitioners, within a period of three months failing which, 9% interest will be carry for that amount.



W.P No.19355 of 2015

WEB COPY

7. The main grievance of the writ petitioner is that the very applicability of the Industrial Dispute Act itself is in question and it has to be decided by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. In the meantime, the workmen filed a computation petition and also tried to execute the order, therefore, if the order is executed without considering the pendency of the Civil Appeals, pending before the Supreme Court, it would cause prejudice to the writ petitioner. Since the Civil Appeals are pending before the Supreme Court, the point of whether the Forest Department comes under the Industries or not has to be decided by the Supreme Court. However, there is no stay order passed by the Supreme Court and, thus the Labour Court computed the amount of Rs.90,000/- to each of the petitioners.

8. It is a well settled law that, while pendency of the appeal before the appellate Court if any orders passed by the Subordinates Courts, those orders are subject to the outcome of the result of the pending appeal. Though the amount was computed by the Labour Court, so far the order has not been executed. Therefore, the order passed in



W.P No.19355 of 2015

Computation Petition in C.P.No.02 of 2012 is based on the order passed in the main I.D.Nos.15 to 34 & 36 of 1999. Since the appeals are pending before the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The order passed by the Labour Court is subject to the outcome of the result of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the pending Civil Appeals. Therefore, this Court need not set aside the order passed by the Labour Court in the computation petition. However, the execution Petition is pending before the Labour Court and it is for the writ petitioner to approach the Labour Court in the said Execution Petition by filing appropriate applications for a stay the order of execution till the disposal of the appeals before the Supreme Court. On such applications, if any filed by the writ petitioner, the Labour Court has to consider the same on merits in accordance with law.

9. With the above observations, this writ petition is disposed of. No costs. Consequently connected Miscellaneous Petition is also closed.

24.01.2025

Index: Yes/No.
Internet/Yes/No

drl



W.P No.19355 of 2015

WEB COPY To

1.The Presiding Officer,
Labour Court, Vellore.



WEB COPY



W.P No.19355 of 2015

P.DHANABAL.J.

drl

W.P.No.19355 of 2013
and MP.No.2 of 2013 and MP.Nos.1 & 2 of 2014

24.01.2025