

WP(MD)No.2125 of 2026

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

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RESERVED ON : 25.02.2026

DELIVERED ON : 03.07.2026

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE **B.PUGALENDHI**

WP(MD)No.2125 of 2026

Rajaguru

: Petitioner

Vs.

- 1.The Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu,
Finance Department,
Secretariat, Fort St.George,
Chennai – 600 009.
- 2.The Commissioner of Revenue Administration,
Ezhilagam, Chepauk,
Chennai – 600 005.
- 3.The Commissioner of Land Administration,
Ezhilagam, Chepauk,
Chennai – 600 005.
- 4.The Director,
Department of Treasuries and Accounts,
Panagal Maligai,
Saidapet,
Chennai – 600 015.



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5.The District Collector,
Virudhunagar District,
Virudhunagar.

6.The Revenue Divisional Officer,
Sivakasi,
Virudhunagar District.

7.The Revenue Divisional Officer,
Aruppukottai,
Virudhunagar District.

8.The Tahsildar,
Taluk Office,
Tiruchuli,
Virudhunagar District.

9.The Tahsildar,
Taluk Office,
Sivakasi,
Virudhunagar District.

: Respondents

PRAYER: Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India seeking issuance of a Writ of Mandamus directing the respondents to provide incentive increments to the petitioner for his higher educational qualification of B.Sc & M.Sc.

For Petitioner : Mr.R.Murugappan

For Respondents: Mr.C.Venkatesh Kumar
Special Government Pleader



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ORDER

The petitioner is serving as a Village Administrative Officer at V.Chokkalingapuram Village, Sivakasi Taluk, Virudhunagar District. He obtained a B.Sc. Degree in Microbiology in the year 2005 and thereafter completed his Post Graduate Degree in the year 2008. Subsequently, he was selected through the Group-IV Services Examination and was appointed as Village Administrative Officer on 07.02.2013. Nearly nine years after entering service, the petitioner submitted a representation dated 09.03.2022 seeking the grant of higher start of pay at two stages by placing reliance upon GO.Ms.No.321, Finance (Pay Cell) Department, dated 02.07.1998. The proposal was thereafter forwarded by the eighth respondent to the third respondent on 03.07.2025. Alleging that no orders have been passed thereon, the present writ petition has been filed seeking a direction to the respondents to approve his claim.

2.Learned counsel appearing for the petitioner submitted that the petitioner possessed a graduate qualification even prior to his appointment



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as Village Administrative Officer and is therefore entitled to the benefit of

higher start of pay in terms of GO.Ms.No.321, Finance (Pay Cell)

Department, dated 02.07.1998. It is further submitted that similarly placed

Village Administrative Officers have been granted the said benefit and

reliance is placed upon one Dhanasekaran, who was extended the benefit

in the year 2015. According to the learned counsel, the denial of a similar

benefit to the petitioner is arbitrary and violative of Article 14 of the

Constitution of India.

3.Per contra, the learned Special Government Pleader submitted that GO.Ms.No.321 provided higher start of pay to graduate employees in certain categories where the minimum educational qualification prescribed for appointment was SSLC. The said Government Order, insofar as Record Clerks, Junior Assistants and Typists are concerned, was subsequently withdrawn by GO.Ms.No.241, Finance (Pay Cell) Department, dated 22.07.2013. Thereafter, the Government, by GO.Ms.No.37, Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department, dated 10.03.2020, took a policy decision to discontinue the scheme of advance/incentive increments



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throughout the Government service and also directed that no fresh proposals should thereafter be entertained. It is therefore submitted that the petitioner, having made his claim only in the year 2022, is not entitled to any relief.

4.This Court has carefully considered the rival submissions and perused the materials placed on record.

5.The petitioner entered service as Village Administrative Officer on 07.02.2013. Though he admittedly possessed graduate and post-graduate qualifications even prior to his appointment, he did not seek the benefit of higher start of pay at the time of his appointment. The claim came to be made only on 09.03.2022, nearly nine years after joining service.

6.The petitioner's claim rests entirely upon GO.Ms.No.321, Finance (Pay Cell) Department, dated 02.07.1998. The said Government Order introduced the scheme of higher start of pay at two stages in respect of graduate Record Clerks, Junior Assistants and Typists, since the minimum



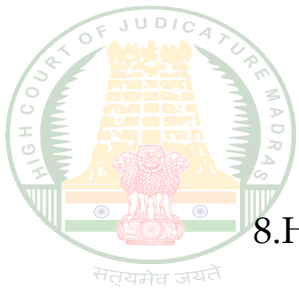
qualification prescribed for those posts was SSLC. The benefit was also

extended to graduate Village Administrative Officers. Paragraph 4 of the

Government Order reads as follows:

"These orders shall apply to Graduate Village Administrative Officers of Revenue Department also."

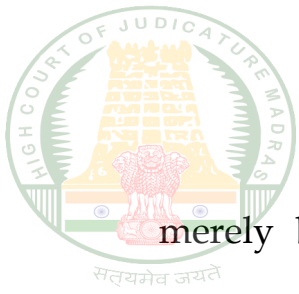
7.Subsequently, the Government revisited the policy underlying the grant of higher start of pay. It was noticed that the grant of such benefit had resulted in pay anomalies whereby employees in feeder categories were drawing higher pay than those occupying promotional posts. The Government also took note of the fact that a substantial number of candidates entering Government service were already graduates and, therefore, the original object of encouraging employees to acquire higher qualifications no longer justified the continuance of the scheme. Accordingly, by GO.Ms.No.241, Finance (Pay Cell) Department, dated 22.07.2013, the benefit of higher start of pay was withdrawn in respect of Record Clerks, Junior Assistants and Typists joining service on or after 01.04.2013.



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8. However, GO.Ms.No.241 does not specifically deal with Village Administrative Officers, though they were also brought within the ambit of GO.Ms.No.321. It is, for this reason, the petitioner relies upon an instance where another Village Administrative Officer was granted the benefit even in the year 2015. Be that as it may, the petitioner has approached the authorities only in the year 2022. By then, the Government had already issued GO.Ms.No.37, Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department, dated 10.03.2020, whereby the scheme of advance/incentive increments was discontinued in all Departments and it was specifically directed that no fresh proposals in that regard should thereafter be entertained. The petitioner's request, therefore, cannot be considered after the Government has taken a policy decision bringing the scheme itself to an end. On this ground alone, the writ petition deserves to fail.

9. Before parting with the case, this Court deems it appropriate to make certain observations on the object underlying GO.Ms.No.321, Finance (Pay Cell) Department, dated 02.07.1998. The higher start of pay contemplated under the said Government Order was not introduced



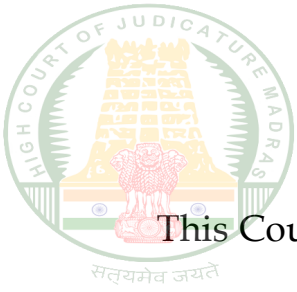
merely because a Government servant possessed a higher educational qualification. The object of the scheme was that acquisition of higher education would improve the knowledge, competence and efficiency of the Government servant, which, in turn, would result in better discharge of official duties and better service to the public. The incentive was, therefore, conceived in public interest. The financial benefit was only a means adopted by the Government to encourage its employees to acquire higher qualifications so that the administration would ultimately benefit. It is also relevant to note that the benefit is a recurring financial benefit paid from the public exchequer. Therefore, the Government is expected to examine whether the purpose for which the benefit was granted continues to be achieved in respect of those officers.

10. Village Administrative Officers occupy an important position in the revenue administration. They are the first point of contact for the public in several matters relating to revenue administration, maintenance of village records, issuance of certificates and implementation of various Government schemes. If the higher start of pay was granted on the premise



that a graduate Village Administrative Officer would discharge these duties more efficiently, the Government should also periodically examine whether the officers who continue to receive the benefit have, in fact, translated their higher educational qualification into better performance and better public service. Mere possession of a higher qualification, by itself, cannot justify the continuance of a recurring financial benefit throughout the service career without any review.

11.As noticed earlier, while the Government reviewed the continuance of the higher start of pay in respect of Record Clerks, Junior Assistants and Typists by issuing GO.Ms.No.241, Finance (Pay Cell) Department, dated 22.07.2013, no similar exercise appears to have been undertaken in respect of Village Administrative Officers, though they were also brought within the ambit of GO.Ms.No.321. Thereafter, the Government discontinued the scheme of advance/incentive increments by issuing GO.Ms.No.37, Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department, dated 10.03.2020. However, those Village Administrative Officers who had already been granted the higher start of pay continue to receive the benefit.



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This Court is, therefore, of the view that the Government should undertake a review in respect of those existing beneficiaries to examine whether the object for which the higher start of pay was originally granted continues to be achieved.

12. Accordingly, the Government is directed to devise an appropriate, transparent and objective mechanism to periodically review the performance of those Village Administrative Officers who are presently receiving the higher start of pay under GO.Ms.No.321. The review shall be confined only to those existing beneficiaries and shall not be treated as a mechanism for extending the benefit to any other employee. The review shall examine whether the higher educational qualification, on the basis of which the benefit was originally granted, has actually resulted in better discharge of official duties, greater efficiency in administration and better service to the public. Based on such review, it is open to the Government to take an appropriate policy decision, in accordance with law, as to whether the continuance of the higher start of pay in favour of the existing beneficiaries remains justified.



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WEB COPY With the above observations and directions, this writ petition stands dismissed. No costs.

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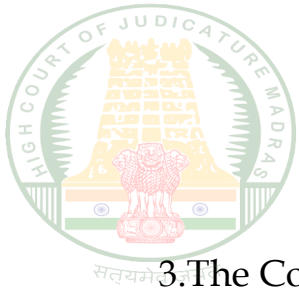
Note:-

Mark a copy of this order to

1. The Chief Secretary,
Government of Tamil Nadu,
Secretariat, Chennai.
2. The Secretary to Government,
Revenue and Disaster Management,
Secretariat, Chennai.
3. The Secretary to Government,
Human Resources Management,
Secretariat, Chennai.

To

- 1.The Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu,
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Secretariat, Fort St.George,
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- 2.The Commissioner of Revenue Administration,
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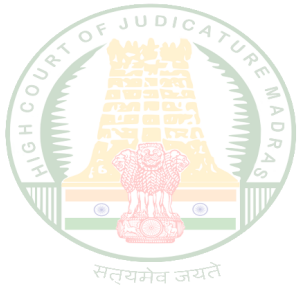
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B.PUGALENDHI, J.

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