

(2014) 09 MAD CK 0176

In the Madras High Court

Case No : W.P. (MD)Nos. 14578, 14579 to 14581 of 2014 and M.P.(MD)Nos. 1,2,1,2,1,2,1 and 2 of 2014

A. Rengaswami

APPELLANT

Vs

The Senior Regional Manager

RESPONDENT

Date of Decision : 09-09-2014

Acts Referred:

General Clauses Act, 1897 — Section 16

Citation : (2014) 09 MAD CK 0176

Hon'ble Judges : K.K. Sasidharan, J

Bench : Single Bench

Judgement

K.K. Sasidharan, J.

W.P.(MD)No.14578/2014:

1. The petitioner was appointed as Shop Salesman by the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation Limited (hereinafter referred to as "the TASMAL), by order dated 26.11.2003. He was placed at Shop No. 4701 at Asaripallam. While conducting vehicle check, the Prohibition and Excise Wing Police found that liquor bottles belonging to the said shop were sold to private hotel. The second respondent, vide his proceedings dated 30.12.2013, relieved the petitioner from service pending enquiry. The said order is challenged in this Writ Petition.

W.P.(MD)No.14579/2014:

2. The petitioner was appointed as Shop Salesman by TASMAL, vide order dated 12.12.2003. He was placed at Shop No. 4701 at Asaripallam. While conducting vehicle check, the Prohibition and Excise Wing Police found that liquor bottles belonging to the said shop were sold to private hotel. The second respondent, vide his proceedings dated 30.12.2013, relieved the petitioner from service pending enquiry. The said order is challenged in this Writ Petition.

W.P.(MD)No.14580/2014:

3. The petitioner was appointed as Shop Sales Assistant (Bar Tenderer) by TASMAL, vide order dated 04.02.2004. He was placed at Shop No. 4701 at Asaripallam. While conducting vehicle check, the Prohibition and Excise Wing Police found that liquor bottles belonging to the said shop were sold to private hotel. The second respondent, vide his proceedings dated 30.12.2013, relieved the petitioner from service pending enquiry. The said order is challenged in this Writ Petition.

W.P.(MD)No.14581/2014:

4. The petitioner was appointed as Shop Supervisor by TASMAL, vide order dated 05.02.2004. He was placed at Shop No. 4701 at Asaripallam. While conducting vehicle check, the Prohibition and Excise Wing Police found that liquor bottles belonging to the said shop were sold to private hotel. The second respondent, vide his proceedings dated 30.12.2013, relieved the petitioner from service pending enquiry. The said order is challenged in this Writ Petition.

SUBMISSIONS:

5. The learned counsel for the petitioners, by placing reliance on the order dated 04.08.2014, in W.P.(MD)Nos.12465, 12466, 12467, 12491, 12492, 12493, 12494, 12495, 1340, 1670, 1672, 1673, 1674 and 1675 of 2014, submitted that similar Writ Petitions were disposed of by this Court with a direction to the TASMAL to conduct enquiry and pass final orders.

6. The learned Standing Counsel for TASMAL submitted that the impugned orders are nothing but suspension orders pending initiation of disciplinary proceedings.

DISCUSSION:

7. The impugned orders were passed on the basis of inspection conducted by the Prohibition and Excise Wing Police. The respondents have now made it clear that these orders are nothing but suspension orders, whereby and whereunder, the petitioners were suspended pending enquiry. The respondents propose to conduct an enquiry in the matter.

THE PRECEDENT:

8. The Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court in R.P. Kapur Vs. Union of India (UOI) and Another, made it very clear that the appointing authority is entitled to suspend the employee pending departmental enquiry. The observation reads thus:

"11. The general principle therefore is that an employer can suspend an employee pending an enquiry into his conduct and the only question that can arise on such suspension will relate to the payment during the period of such suspension. If there is no express term in the contract relating to suspension and payment during such suspension or if there is no statutory provision in any law or rule, the employee is entitled to his full remuneration for the period of his

interim suspension; on the other hand if there is a term in this respect in the contract or there is a provision in the statute or the rules framed thereunder providing for the scale of payment during suspension, the payment would be in accordance therewith. These general principles in our opinion apply with equal force in a case where the government is the employer and a public servant is the employee with this modification that in view of the peculiar structural hierarchy of Government, the employer in the case of government, must be held to be the authority which has the power to appoint a public servant. On general principles therefore the authority entitled to appoint a public servant would be entitled to suspend him pending a departmental enquiry into his conduct or pending a criminal proceeding, which may eventually result in a departmental enquiry against him. This general principle is illustrated by the provision in Section 16 of the General Clauses Act, No.X of 1897, which lays down that where any Central Act or Regulation gives power of appointment that includes the power to suspend or dismiss unless a different intention appears. Though this provision does not directly apply in the present case, it is in consonance with the general law of master and servant. But what amount should be paid to the public servant during such suspension will depend upon the provisions of the statute or rule in that connection. If there is such a provision the payment during suspension will be in accordance therewith. But if there is no such provision, the public servant will be entitled to his full emoluments during the period of suspension. This suspension must be distinguished from suspension as a punishment which is a different matter altogether depending upon the rules in that behalf. On general principles therefore the Government, like any other employer, would have a right to suspend a public servant in one of two ways. It may suspend any public servant pending departmental enquiry or pending criminal proceedings; this may be called interim suspension. Or the Government may proceed to hold a departmental enquiry and after his being found guilty order suspension as a punishment if the rules so permit. This will be suspension as a penalty. These general principles will apply to all public servants but they will naturally be subject to the provisions of Art.314 and this brings us to an investigation of what was the right of a member of the former Secretary of State's Services in the matter of suspension, whether as a penalty or otherwise."

9. The Supreme Court in Balvantray Ratilal Patel Vs. The State of Maharashtra, , reiterated the power of the employer to suspend the employee pending disciplinary proceedings.

"4. The general principle therefore is that an employer can suspend an employee pending an inquiry into his misconduct and the only question that can arise in such suspension will relate to payment during the period of such suspension. If there is no express term relating to payment during such suspension or if there is no statutory provision in any enactment or rule the employee is entitled to his full remuneration for the period of his interim suspension. On the other hand, if there is a term in this respect in the contract of employment or if there is a provision in the statute or the rules framed thereunder providing for the scale of

payment during suspension the payment will be made in accordance therewith. This principle applies with equal force in a case where the Government is an employer and a public servant is an employee with this qualification that in view of the peculiar structural hierarchy of Government administration, the employer in the case of employment by Government must be held to be the authority which has the power to appoint the public servant concerned. It follows therefore that the authority entitled to appoint the public servant is entitled to suspend him pending a departmental enquiry into his conduct or pending a criminal proceeding, which may eventually result in a departmental enquiry against him. But what amount should be paid to the public servant during such suspension will depend upon the provisions of the statute or statutory rule in that connection. If there is such a provision the payment during suspension will be in accordance therewith. But if there is no such provision, the public servant will be entitled to his full emoluments during the period of suspension. On general principles therefore the Government, like any other employer, would have a right to suspend a public servant in one of two ways. It may suspend any public servant pending departmental enquiry or pending criminal proceedings; this may be called interim suspension. The Government may also proceed to hold a departmental enquiry and after his being found guilty order suspension as a punishment if the rules so permit. This will be suspension as a penalty. As we have already pointed out, the question as to what amount should be paid to the public servant during the period of interim suspension or suspension as a punishment will depend upon the provisions of the statute or statutory rules made in that connection."

10. This Court has passed a common order in W.P.(MD)Nos.12465, 12466, 12467, 12491, 12492, 12493, 12494, 12495, 1340, 1670, 1672, 1673, 1674 and 1675 of 2014, on 04.08.2014, directing the respondent therein to conduct enquiry and pass final orders, within a period of four weeks.

11. Accordingly, by following the order dated 04.08.2014 in W.P.(MD)Nos.12465, 12466, 12467, 12491, 12492, 12493, 12494, 12495, 1340, 1670, 1672, 1673, 1674 and 1675 of 2014, there shall be a direction to the respondents to initiate enquiry proceedings as expeditiously as possible and conclude the same, within a period of two months from the date of receipt of a copy of this order. In case of any delay in concluding the disciplinary proceedings, subsistence allowance should be paid to the petitioners till the disposal of such proceedings.

12. The Writ Petitions are disposed of with the above direction. Consequently, the connected miscellaneous petitions are closed. No costs.