

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Gajanan L. Pernekar

Vs.

State of Goa

(A Anand, M Rao and N S Hegde JJ.)

16.08.1999

ORDER

1. Delay condoned.

2. Leave granted.

3. The appellant was appointed as the Headmaster of Shri Ramdas High Court School, Amona, Goa on 25th May, 1990 in the pay scale of Rs. 325-575/-. He was confirmed in the post of Headmaster after completion of the period of probation on 1-6-1972. Shri Ramdas High School, which was a private school, was taken over by the Government, alongwith the staff working in the said school w.e.f. 1.4.1974. At the time when the school was taken over, the appellant was drawing his pay in the revised pay scale of Rs. 400/-. After the take over of the school vide an order dated 13th June, 1974, the Government appointed the appellant as Headmaster of Government Middle School at Saligao in the pay scale of Rs. 300-25-450-EB-25-600. Appellant protested against his appointment as Headmaster of the Middle School, since earlier he had been working as a Headmaster of the High School. The appellant, after having joined the post of the Headmaster of the Middle School, made various representations. He cited cases of some others to point out the injustice that had been done to him. On 13th January, 1993, the appellant was promoted to the post of Deputy Education Officer in the Directorate of Education on ad-hoc basis.

4. The representations made by the appellant from time to time were considered by the Government and on 16.2.1994, an order came to be made whereby the appellant was absorbed as a Headmaster of Government High School with retrospective effect from the date of take over of the School, i.e. with effect from 1.4.1974 with all consequential benefits flowing therefrom. The earlier order dated 10.6.1974 was rescinded, since, the consequential benefits, as granted by the Government in its order dated 16.2. 1994, were not given to the appellant, he filed Writ Petition No. 261/1996 in the

High Court of Bombay at Goa. The precise issue raised in the writ petition was with regard to the failure to give consequential benefits to him as flowing from the order of the Government, dated 16.2.1994. On 14th July, 1998, the writ petition was heard and disposed off. So far as the consequential benefits are concerned, the appellant was given the liberty to make a representation to the department and the department was directed to decide that representation within a period of three months from the date of receipt of the representation.

5. In para-2 of the order of the High Court, dated 14th July, 1998, the learned Bench observed:-

2. During the course of hearing it was revealed that the absorption of the petitioner against the post of Headmaster in a middle School was with his consent. Mr. Lotlikar tried to urge that consent was obtained under duress and coercion. It is painful to note that such averment was not incorporated in the petition. We treat this as material suppression. We do not propose to entertain the petition.

6. The appellant, being aggrieved of this direction, has filed this appeal by special leave. During the pendency of the proceedings in this Court the Government, influenced by the observations made in para-2 of the order of the High Court, dated 14th July, 1998 (supra), made an order on 21st/22nd January, 1999. The Government not only rejected the request of the appellant for grant of consequential benefits flowing from the earlier order dated 16.2.1994 but even rescinded the order of absorption of the appellant as Headmaster of the Government High School without putting the appellant to any notice and without hearing him in that behalf.

7. It is not disputed before us that the issue before the High Court in Writ Petition No. 261/96 was a limited one, confined to the grant of consequential benefits. The observations made in para-2 (supra) were, in our opinion, strictly speaking, not called for. Those observations have led to the passing of the order dated 21st/22nd January, 1999. In the counter filed on behalf of the respondents to the special leave petition, it has been stated in para-2 of the preliminary objections that "the respondents have, in obedience to the High Court's directions have passed order dated 22.1.1999 recalling the Government's earlier order dated 16.2.1994 taking a decision on the representations made by the petitioner.

8. The manner in which the order dated 21st/22nd January, 1999 came to be made was, to say the least, not proper. The appellant was denied of the benefits of the order dated 16.2.1994 unheard, here has been a breach of the principle of natural justice and a violation of fair play in action. The earlier order made in favour of the appellant as early as on 16.2.1994 was rescinded without giving any opportunity to the appellant to show cause against it. Absorption of the appellant as Headmaster of Government High School by the order dated 16.2.1994 had not been put in issue through any proceedings by any party at any point of time. That benefit could not have been taken away from the appellant without affording him any opportunity of hearing, even where the absorption as Head Master of High School had been put in issue. The principles of natural justice have been respected in their breach. The order dated 21st/22nd January, 1999 was made by the respondents influenced by the observations contained in para-2 of the order of the High Court (supra), which observations, we have already found, were not at all called for. In the facts and circumstances of the case, the order dated 21st/22nd January, 1999 cannot be sustained and we accordingly set it aside. Consequently, we allow this appeal and set aside the observations of the High Court contained in para-2 of its judgment dated 14th July, 1998 (supra) as well as the follow-up order made by the State on 21st/22nd January, 1999. As a result the order dated 16.2.1994 would stand revived. We grant liberty to the appellant to make a representation to the State Government for grant of consequential

benefits flowing from the order of 16.2.1994, as was directed by the High Court itself. In case a representation is filed by the appellant before the concerned department within six weeks from the date of this order, the same shall be decided by the department within a period of twelve weeks from the date of the receipt to the copy of the representation. The representation shall be decided by the department uninfluenced by the order made on 21st/22nd January, 1999 as well as the observations made in para-2 of the High Court order (supra), which, we have set aside.

9. The appeal, thus, succeeds and is allowed in the above terms. No costs.