

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION

CIVIL APPEAL NO. 8031 OF 2022

The Mahatma Gandhi University and Ors. ...Appellant(s)

Versus

Rincymol Mathew ...Respondent(s)

J U D G M E N T

M.R. SHAH, J.

1. Feeling aggrieved and dissatisfied with the impugned judgment and order passed by the Division Bench of the High Court of Kerala at Ernakulam in Writ Appeal No. 1355 of 2019 by which the Division Bench of the High Court has dismissed the said writ appeal preferred by the appellant and has confirmed the judgment and order passed by the learned Single Judge passed in Writ Petition No. 13265 of 2018 directing the appellant University to pass appropriate orders counting the past service of the respondent, who was working as Assistant Professor in the School of Behavioural Sciences under the University, for the purposes of computing the benefits due to her in accordance with the Career Advancement Scheme (hereinafter referred to as "CAS") under the UGC Regulations, the University has preferred the present appeal.

2. The respondent herein was initially appointed as a Lecturer in the School of Medical Education, a self-financing institution under the appellant University w.e.f. 03.10.1998. The said appointment was consequent to a selection process that was conducted pursuant to administrative sanction accorded by the Vice-Chancellor of the University after obtaining necessary approval from the Director, School of Medical Education. Initially, she was appointed on probation. Her probation in the post of Lecturer was thereafter declared on 03.10.1999 and she continued to work as Lecturer till 05.02.2001. That thereafter she was appointed as Assistant Professor in Nursing for the period between 06.02.2001 and 11.10.2004 as Associate Professor in Nursing between 04.10.2004 and 11.04.2005 and as Professor in Nursing between 12.04.2005 and 20.01.2011. That thereafter w.e.f. 21.01.2011, she was appointed as Assistant Professor in the School of Behavioural Sciences, department of the Mahatma Gandhi University.

2.1 The dispute arose with regard to the entitlement of the respondent to reckon her service in the School of Medical Education for the period between 03.10.1998 to 21.02.2011 for the purpose of the CAS envisaged under the UGC Regulations. Her request for extension of benefit of CAS was considered favourably by the University and by order dated 06.12.2013, the Syndicate of the University decided to grant her the benefits of promotion, pay fixation etc. by reckoning her service in

the School of Medical Education for the said purpose. That thereafter, the Vice-Chancellor, in exercise of his powers under Section 10(17) under Chapter III of the Mahatma Gandhi University Act, 1985 accepted the recommendation of the Syndicate Staff Sub-Committee and revoked the earlier resolution of the Syndicate that had granted the respondent the benefits of the CAS. The reason stated for revocation of the earlier Syndicate decision and the denial of the benefits of CAS to the respondent was that her initial appointment as Lecturer in the School of Medical Education was not to a post that was duly sanctioned in terms of the Mahatma Gandhi University Statutes.

2.2 The denial / revocation of the earlier Syndicate decision and the denial of the benefit of CAS were the subject matter of writ petition before the learned Single Judge. The learned Single Judge allowed the writ petition by observing that the appointment of the respondent as Lecturer was after following selection procedure and that she was duly qualified. The learned Single Judge therefore directed to count the past services of the respondent in the School of Medical Education in accordance with the UGC Regulations and to grant the benefit of CAS. The appeal preferred by the appellant before the Division Bench of the High Court has been dismissed by the impugned judgment and order. Hence the University has preferred the present appeal.

3. Learned counsel appearing on behalf of the appellant University has taken us to Regulation 10.1 of the UGC Regulations. It is submitted that as per Regulation 10.1, only previous regular service as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor should be counted for direct recruitment and promotion under CAS. Therefore, it is submitted that as initially, the appointment of the respondent as a Lecturer was on temporary post and was not made after following due procedure as required under the Mahatma Gandhi University Statutes, 1997, respondent shall not be entitled to past services rendered for CAS benefits.

4. While opposing the present appeal, Shri Gaurav Agrawal, learned counsel appearing on behalf of the respondent has taken us to the appointment orders appointing the respondent initially as a Lecturer and thereafter as Assistant Professor and thereafter as Associate Professor. It is submitted that the initial appointment of the respondent – original writ petitioner was after following due procedure and on probation and her probation came to be confirmed subsequently thereafter by order dated 21.10.2000. It is submitted that thereafter by order dated 03.02.2001 on the approval of the Director, School of Medical Education, respondent – original writ petitioner was appointed as Assistant Professor w.e.f. 06.02.2001 in the regular pay-scale. It is submitted that thereafter her probation as Assistant Professor was confirmed. It is submitted that thereafter by order dated 12.10.2004, she was promoted

to the post of Associate professor in the regular pay-scale of Rs. 14300-450-19250. It is submitted that in that view of the matter neither the learned Single Judge nor the Division Bench have committed any error in directing the University to count the period during which the respondent worked as Lecturer / Assistant Professor / Associate Professor for the purpose of granting the benefit under the CAS.

5. We have heard the learned counsel for the respective parties at length.

6. We have considered the initial appointment order of the respondent as Lecturer. Applications were invited from qualified candidates and thereafter the respondent was appointed as Lecturer in the regular pay-scale, initially on probation. The said appointment was after obtaining appropriate approval from Director, School of Medical Education. The sanction was accorded by the Vice-Chancellor. That thereafter by order dated 21.10.2000, her probation was declared w.e.f. 03.10.1999. That thereafter, she was appointed as Assistant Professor and thereafter as Associate Professor continuously in the regular pay-scale.

6.1 It may be true that at the relevant time when she was appointed as Lecturer, the post was temporary but as observed hereinabove, on that

temporary post, her appointment was sanctioned by the Director as well as Vice-Chancellor. As observed hereinabove, she has continuously worked right from 1998 (03.10.1998) till she continued to work as Associate Professor. At this stage, the Regulation 10.1 with respect to the grant of CAS is required to be considered, which reads as under:-

"10.1. Previous regular service, whether national or international as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor or Professor or equivalent in a University, College, National Laboratories or other scientific/professional Organizations such as the CSIR, ICAR, DRDO, UGC, ICSSR, ICHR, ICMR, DBT, etc., should be counted for direct recruitment and promotion under CAS of a teacher as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor or any other nomenclature these posts are described as per Appendix III-Table No. II provided that:

- (a) The essential qualifications of the post held were not lower than the qualifications prescribed by the UGC for Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor as the case may be.
- (b) The post is/was in an equivalent grade or of the pre-revised scale of pay as the post of Assistant Professor (Lecturer) Associate Professor (Reader) and Professor.
- (c) The candidate for direct recruitment has applied through proper channel only.
- (d) The concerned Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor should possess the same minimum qualifications as prescribed by the UGC for appointment to the post of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor, as the case may be.
- (e) The post was filled in accordance with the prescribed selection procedure as laid down in the Regulations of University/State Government/Central

Government/ Concerned Institutions, for such appointments.

- (f) The previous appointment was not as guest lecturer for any duration, or an ad hoc or in a leave vacancy of less than one year duration. Ad hoc or temporary service of more than one year duration can be counted provided that:
 - (i) the period of service was of more than one year duration;
 - (ii) the incumbent was appointed on the recommendation of duly constituted Selection Committee; and
 - (iii) the incumbent was selected to the permanent post in continuation to the ad hoc or temporary service, without any break.
- (g) No distinction should be made with reference to the nature of management of the institution where previous service was rendered (private/local body/Government), was considered for counting past services under this clause.”

6.2 Regulation 10.1 is required to be read as a whole. As per clause 10.1(f), the previous appointment as ad hoc or temporary service of more than one year duration can be counted provided that : (i) the period of service was of more than one year duration; (ii) the incumbent was appointed on the recommendation of duly constituted Selection Committee; and (iii) the incumbent was selected to the permanent post in continuation to the ad hoc or temporary service, without any break.

6.3 In that view of the matter, when the respondent worked continuously right from 1998 initially as Lecturer, thereafter her probation was confirmed; thereafter she was appointed / promoted as Assistant Professor and thereafter again promoted to the post of Associate Professor on regular basis and on regular pay-scale, therefore, the respondent shall be entitled to get her regular service counted for the period from 03.10.1998 to 21.10.2011 for the purpose of grant of the benefit of CAS.

7. In view of the above and for the reasons stated above, no error has been committed by the learned Single Judge and/or the Division Bench of the High Court in allowing the writ petition / writ appeal and directing the University to grant the benefit of CAS after counting her earlier service rendered from 03.10.1998. We are in complete agreement with the view taken by the High Court. No interference of this Court is called for.

Under the circumstances, present appeal fails and deserves to be dismissed and is accordingly dismissed.

.....J.
[M.R. SHAH]

NEW DELHI;
NOVEMBER 10, 2022.

.....J.
[M.M. SUNDRESH]