

Prabhavati Devi

Vs

Union of India and Others

Civil Appeal No. 10492 of 1995

(Sujata V. Manohar, M. M. Punchhi JJ)

16.11.1995

ORDER

1. Leave granted.

2. Heard learned counsel for the parties.

3. The appellant herein is the widow of late Bipin Kumar Rai who was a temporary Railway servant in this manner : He, initially, was taken in the Railway Establishment as a casual worker; and w.e.f. 27-4-1983 he acquired the status of a 'substitute'. According to the definition given in Rule 2315 of the terms and conditions applicable to 'substitutes' in temporary service, they are persons engaged in the Indian Railway Establishments on regular scales of pay and allowances applicable to posts against which they are employed. These posts may fall vacant on account of a Railway servant being on leave or due to non-availability of permanent or temporary Railway servants and which cannot be kept vacant.

4. The deceased kept working as a 'substitute' till 5-1-1987 when he died. But before his demise, he came to acquire certain rights and privileges under Rule 2318 of the Rules applicable to Railway Establishments. The said rule provides that substitutes shall be afforded all the rights and privileges as may be admissible to temporary Railway servants, from time to time, on completion of 6 months' continuous service. Indubitably, the deceased had worked beyond 6 months and that too continuously. Having become a temporary servant in this manner, he became entitled to family pension under sub-rule 3(b) of Rule 2311, whereunder it is provided that the widow/minor children of a temporary Railway servant, who dies while in service after a service of not less than 1 year continuous (qualifying) service shall be eligible for a family pension under the provisions of para 801 of the Manual of Railway Pension Rules. Further, in their case the amount of death gratuity admissible will be reduced by an amount equal to the employee's 2 months' pay on which the death gratuity is determined. The Railways have paid to the appellant gratuity under this sub-rule, but have denied to her the family pension. Her claim before the Central Administrative Tribunal, Patna Bench, Patna, was dismissed which has culminated in this appeal.

5. On the acquisition of temporary status derived in the manner stated above, it is difficult to sustain the orders of the Tribunal and to deny family pension to the widow and children of the deceased. See in this connection for support L. Robert D'Souza v. Executive Engineer, S. Rly. [(1982) 1 SCC 645 : 1982 SCC (L&S) 124] and Union of India v. Basant Lal [(1992) 2 SCC 679 : 1992 SCC (L&S) 611 : (1992) 20 ATC 280 : JT (1992) 2 SC 459]. We have put the proposition to the learned counsel appearing for the Railways but he is unable to support the orders of the Tribunal; overlooking as it does the chain in consequence, making the deceased acquire a temporary status

and on his demise his widow and children acquiring the right to claim family pension.

6. We, thus, allow this appeal; set aside the impugned orders of the Tribunal and allow the claim to family pension as projected by the appellant. We also direct the Railway to work out the pension due within 2 months from today and deliver the pension as also the arrears to the appellant within 15 days thereafter, if not earlier and also pay interest at the rate of 12% per annum from the date it was due till payment.

7. The appellant shall get her costs throughout.