

Indermani Kirtipal

Vs

Union of India, and others

Special Leave Petition (C) No. 21870 of 1993

K. Ramaswamy, B. L. Hansaria, G. B. Pattanaik JJ)

06.02.1996

JUDGMENT

1. The petitioner has raised a jurisdictional issue. The learned single Member of the Tribunal has dismissed the petitioner's application in O.A.No.648/92 by order dated May 11,1993. Learned counsel Shri D.K.Garg relies upon Section 5 of the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985 (for short, the 'Act') to contend that the single Member had no jurisdiction to decide the matter relating to promotion of the petitioner. His case is that he joined the Department as a semi-skilled workman and was later on appointed as Asstt. Store Keeper against OEP vacancy in Dehradun. When juniors and also seniors to him were promoted in OEP Section, he was singled out violating his right for consideration for appointment to the higher post of OEP Section. The case of the respondents is that he was in Maintenance Section, though at the initial stage when OEP section was a cell he had worked therein. Therefore, he was not eligible to be considered. All others were transferred along with the posts to the Ordnance factory while he remained in Maintenance Section. As a consequence, they formed a class, the petitioner being a class apart.

2. The question, therefore, is whether learned single member of the Tribunal was competent to decide the matter. We are of the view that the member had the jurisdiction to decide the matter for the reason that it is not a case of initial lack of Jurisdiction. Undoubtedly, the Vice-Chairman of the Tribunal by operation of sub-section (1) of Section 5 has been empowered to classify classes of cases and make sitting arrangements of benches for convenient disposal of cases; and he had ordered accordingly. Sub-section (2) enumerates various categories of cases which the members would be competent to dispose of. When its member would dispose of which matter is one of administrative convenience; it does not relate to his jurisdiction. Even under Section 21 of the Civil Procedure Code objections relating to pecuniary or territorial jurisdiction should be raised at the earliest and if the parties omit to plead and raise the objection, at a later stage, unsuccessful party would be precluded to raise lack of jurisdiction. Since the Tribunal consists of several members, a bench consisting of a single member may also be competent to dispose of certain matters. The matter having been decided by him after considering the case on merits, it is no longer open to the unsuccessful party to plead that the member had no jurisdiction to decide the issue or that the order suffers from initial lack of jurisdiction. It may be a case of improper disposal of the matter without touching the jurisdiction of the member who decided the matter.

3. Under these circumstances, we do not think there is any lack of jurisdiction warranting interference. The petition is accordingly dismissed. Petition dismissed.