

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Union of India

Vs.

Pradip Kumar Dey

09.11.2000

(Doraiswamy Raju and Shivaraj V. Patil JJ.)

JUDGMENT:

SHIVARAJ V. PATIL

This appeal is filed assailing the judgment and order dated 23.12.1992, passed by the High Court of Calcutta in Civil Appeal No. 659 of 1989.

The respondent herein filed a writ petition seeking a writ of mandamus directing the appellants to proceed on the basis of the recommendations presented to the Fourth Pay Commission by Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in order to remove disparity in the pay scales of Naik (Radio Operator) and an employee discharging similar nature of duties in Directorate of Coordination Police Wireless and other Central Government agencies on the ground that the duties performed by the respondent as Naik (Radio Operator) were more hazardous than the duties performed by personnel with similar qualifications and experience in State services and other organizations. The respondent made his claim on the principle of equal pay for equal work. The appellants contested the writ petition by filing a detailed counter contending that the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission had been implemented by the CRPF in all respects and that the respondent was not discriminated; the Fourth Pay Commission had gone deep into various aspects of the pay structure of various categories of the employees of the Central Government and the claim of the respondent on the principle of equal pay for equal work was not tenable having regard to various distinguishable factors.

The learned single Judge by his order dated 28.9.1989 dismissed the writ petition stating that the respondent was appointed as a constable and was promoted as Naik and he could not equate himself with the pay scale of Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police; the Pay Commission Report shows that all Naiks of all Central police establishments including CRPF have been given the same pay scale. The respondent took up the matter in appeal before the Division Bench of the High Court in C.A. No. 659 of 1989. The said appeal was allowed directing the appellants to fix up the pay of the respondent at Rs.1320-2040 and to revise the same if the same pay scale has since been revised in order to remove the disparity. Hence this appeal.

The learned senior counsel for the appellants urged (1) Fourth Pay Commission recommendation had been implemented in letter and spirit and the respondent was not at all discriminated; (2) the job of radio operator in CRPF could not be compared with the other civil radio operators of other departments; the Fourth Pay Commission, having gone deep into the various aspects of the pay structure of various categories of the employees of the Central Government, had made the

In our considered view, the Division Bench of the High Court was not right and justified in straight away giving direction to grant pay scale to the respondent when there was no material placed before the court for comparison in order to apply the principle of equal pay for equal work between the Radio Operators of CRPF and the Radio Operators working in civil side in Central Water Commission and Directorate of Police Wireless. In the absence of material relating to other comparable employees as to the qualifications, method of recruitment, degree of skill, experience involved in performance of job, training required, responsibilities undertaken and other facilities in addition to pay scales, the learned single Judge was right when he stated in the order that in absence of such material it was not possible to grant relief to the respondent. No doubt, the Directorate of CRPF made recommendations to the Pay Commission for giving higher pay scales on the basis of which claim is made by the respondent for grant of pay scale. The factual statements contained in the recommendation of a particular department alone cannot be considered per se proof of such things or they cannot by themselves vouch for the correctness of the same. The said recommendation could not be taken as a recommendation made by the Government. Even otherwise mere recommendation did not confer any right on the respondent to make such a claim for writ of mandamus.

The learned counsel for the respondent strongly relied on the judgment of this Court in *Randhir Singh vs. Union of India and others* and added that this decision has been followed in various subsequent decisions of this Court. According to him when the appellants have supported the claim of the respondent before the Pay Commission having regard to the nature of his duties, the Division Bench of the High Court was right in granting relief to him. There is no difficulty in accepting the principle stated in the said decision and which, in fact, has been reiterated in subsequent decisions of this Court. But as stated in the said decision the principle of equal pay for equal work is not an abstract doctrine but one of substance. In para 8 of the said judgment it is stated thus:-

Construing Articles 14 and 16 in the light of the Preamble and Article 39(d), we are of the view that the principle equal pay for equal work is deducible from those Articles and may be properly applied to cases of unequal scales of pay based on no classification or irrational classification though those drawing the different scales of pay do identical work under the same employer.

(emphasis supplied)

Few decisions were cited by the learned counsel for the appellants in support of his submissions that the courts may not interfere in the matter of fixation of pay scales when the Government fixes or grants pay scales on the basis of various factors including the Pay Commission recommendations that too in the absence of relevant details and particulars of comparable employees. This Court in *S.L. Ahmed and others vs. Union of India and others* has held thus: - It is not for this Court, we think, to examine how far below should be the revised pay scale of the Radio Operators Grade III (Naik). If the Government has prescribed a particular pay scale in respect of them, all that the court can do is to merely pronounce on the validity of the fixation. In the event that the court finds that the prescription is contrary to law it will strike it down and direct the Government to take a fresh decision in the matter. It is a very different case from one where this Court has sought to prescribe pay scales in appeals directly preferred from an award of the Labour Court dealing with such a matter. In the latter case, this Court in its appellate jurisdiction can be regarded as enjoying all the jurisdiction which the Labour Court enjoys. That is not so in the present case. (emphasis supplied) Para 18 of the judgment of this Court in *State of U.P. and others vs. J.P. Chaurasia and others*@@

raised in this appeal, we have no hesitation in holding that the impugned judgment and order are unsustainable. The learned counsel for the appellants placed before us a chart showing difference in pay scales, facilities, other allowances, leave period, providing accommodation, etc. for the purpose of comparison between the pay scales and other facilities of the respondent and similar other employees working in Directorate of Coordination Police Wireless and other Central Government agencies. The learned counsel for the respondent reiterated that the nature of duties and responsibilities of the respondent are not only similar when compared to other employees similarly placed, but on the other hand they are more hazardous. It is an indisputable fact that the pay-scales now claimed by the respondent are those prescribed for the post of Assistant Sub- Inspector. As already noticed above, it is once again a promotional post for a Naik. Acceding to the claim made by the respondent would not merely result in change in the pay-scales but may also lead to alteration of the pattern of hierarchy requiring re-orientation and restructuring of the other posts above and below the post of respondent. Added to this, such consequences are likely to be felt in the various other Central Police Establishments as well. All these which are likely to have a chain-reaction, may require further consideration afresh by expert body like the Pay Commission or the Government itself at an appropriate time in an appropriate manner. Courts should normally leave such matters for the wisdom of administration except the proven cases of hostile discrimination. But in the case on hand, having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case and the position of law stated above, the Division Bench of the High Court was not right in granting the relief itself, straightaway to the respondent; that too, without examining the implications and impact of giving such directions on other cadres. However, we make it clear that the rejection of the claim of the respondent need not be taken as an issue closed once and for all. It is always open to the Government to consider the issue either by making reference to the Pay Commission or itself once again as to the grant of pay-scales to the respondent. It is open to the respondent to make further and detailed representation.

In the result, for the reasons stated above, this appeal is entitled to succeed. Accordingly, it is allowed. The judgment and order under appeal are set aside and the judgment of the learned Single Judge is restored.

No costs.