

Supreme Court of India

State Of West Bengal vs Subal Chandra Das & Ors on 17 November, 1995

Equivalent citations: 1996 SCC (7) 191, JT 1995 (9) 282

Author: K Ramaswamy

Bench: Ramaswamy, K.

PETITIONER:

STATE OF WEST BENGAL

Vs.

RESPONDENT:

SUBAL CHANDRA DAS & ORS.

DATE OF JUDGMENT 17/11/1995

BENCH:

RAMASWAMY, K.

BENCH:

RAMASWAMY, K.

HANSARIA B.L. (J)

CITATION:

1996 SCC (7) 191                      JT 1995 (9)      282

1995 SCALE (7) 237

ACT:

HEADNOTE:

JUDGMENT:

**O R D E R** Leave granted.

This appeal by special leave arises from the Division Bench judgment dated 3rd September, 1993 of the Calcutta High Court in Matter No.6332 of 1988. Admitted facts are that "Moharrir" in the Collectorate of Nadia etc. was initially a feeder post for promotion to the post of Lower Division Clerk. Subsequently, due to spate of litigation Moharrirs were redesignated as Lower Division Clerks. The First Pay Commission had recommended in this behalf thus :

"The scale of pay of Lower Division Clerk is Rs.125-200/- and that of Moharir Rs.100-140/-. It has been recommended elsewhere the existing posts of Moharrirs should, as far as possible, be converted into posts of Lower Division Clerks. The revised scale recommended for these posts is the revised scale recommended for Lower Division Clerks in District Officers".

Acting thereon, the Government issued two orders. After Government decided that the pay-scale of Muharrirs, working in the Regional Offices under the Irrigation and Waterways Department and in the Regional Offices of the Land and Land Reforms Department, would be revised from Rs.180-350/- to Rs.230-425/- with effect from 1.4.70 subject to the condition that there would be no arrear adjustment of salary prior to February 1978 and that their pay in the revised scale of Rs.230-425/- would be fixed under the provisions of WBS (ROPA) Rules, 1970.

Another order dated December 13, 1989 reads as under : "The Governor has been pleased to decide that all the existing posts of Muharrirs, L.R. Act Muharrirs and Copyists held by a person having passed in School Final or its equivalent as the minimum educational qualification and excepting those of the above mentioned posts which are held by persons not having the educational qualification of School Final or its equivalent in the Registration Offices will be designated as posts of Lower Division Clerk.

This order takes effect from 1.7.89 and henceforth all such new posts to be created to the Registration Offices will be designated as Lower Division Clerk."

As a consequence, the posts of Muharrirs have been redesignated as Lower Division Clerks. This is reiterated by the State in paragraph 19 of the SLP as under :

"The petitioners state that the post of Muharrirs have duly been abolished by virtue of the Government Orders which were issued in compliance with the order of the Court whereby the post of Moharrirs were held to be equal to the post of L.D. Clerks. Since the post of Moharrirs have been redesignated as L.D. Clerks, question of post of L.D. Clerks being a promotional post as that of Moharrirs does not and cannot arise."

Thus, it could be seen that the posts of Muharrirs, though initially feeder posts to the Lower Division Clerks, due to Court orders and recommendation made by the Pay Commission, were redesignated as LDCs and were fused into the posts of Lower Division Clerks. Thereby, there is only one cadre, i.e., Lower Division Clerk.

Shri M.P. Verma, learned senior counsel appearing for the respondents, has placed before us a letter dated May 8, 1995 addressed by the District Magistrate & Collector, North 24 - Parganas, and on its basis he contended that two cadres are still existing. The letter addressed by the Collector is clearly wrong and it is in conflict with the orders passed by the Government. We have seen the statutory rule also placed before us. Rules were corrected upto October 15, 1987. It is seen that aforesaid orders were reissued thereafter. Therefore, the rules are not in conflict with the orders passed by the Government.

The question, therefore, would be whether the erstwhile direct recruit L.D. Clerks would be entitled to higher scale of pay than that of promoted L.D.C. In the impugned order the Division Bench of the High Court directed thus :

"The petitioners should succeed in this writ petition. The respondents are directed to revise the pay scales of the petitioners with retrospective effect from 1.4.70 and 1.4.74/1.8.74 in exercise of the powers conferred by Rule 3A of the West Bengal Service Rules, Part I and/or Rule 13 of the West Bengal Service (Revision of Pay and Allowance) Rules, 1970 or Rule 15 of the West Bengal Services (Revision of Pay and Allowance) Rules, 1981 or by exercise of their inherent powers in a manner as would ensure that the pay scales of the petitioners as Lower Division Clerks and Upper Division Clerks be higher than the pay scales granted to the Moharrirs for the corresponding periods from 1.4.70."

The admitted position is that for the L.D.C. the existing scale of pay as per the recommendation of the First Pay Commission was Rs.232-425/-, for selection grade LDC, the scale is Rs.310-550/- and for UDC the scale of pay is Rs.505-670/-. These scales of pay were not disputed.

The question is whether the High Court was justified to create any intermediate scale of pay between LDC and UDC to the erstwhile direct recruit Lower Division Clerks. The contention of Shri Verma is that Moharrirs, who were holding lower scale of pay prior to their being fused into the category as LDC, are now getting higher scale of pay as LDCs, while the direct recruit LDCs are stagnated at the same scale of pay. Therefore, the High Court was justified in directing to create intermediate scale of pay. We find no force in the contention. It is seen that once Moharrirs have been redesignated as LDCs and fused into the category of LDCs all become a class. It would appear that in an earlier litigation filed by the parties, inter se promotion between the Moharrirs and LDCs as UDC was considered and the High Court in a writ petition had directed the Government to prescribe 1:1 ratio between Moharrirs and L.D.Cs. for promotion to the posts of U.D.Cs. The State Government had acted upon and issued rules in that behalf. Therefore, each source, until exhausted, has channel of promotion to the UDC within their respective 50% quota.

On the Moharrirs being integrated as L.D.Cs., no further distinction or discrimination in the scale of pay or promotion chances between Moharrirs and the direct recruit LDCs. is maintainable. All are now entitled to get the same scale of pay and other service benefits. It would appear that in some instances some of the Moharrirs, due to length of service, are getting higher pay. In fixing their scale of pay as LDCs, their previous higher pay due to increments was needed to be protected as special pay and seems to be subject matter of litigation pending before the High Court. Therefore, we need not go into that question. It is also further contended that the direct recruit LDCs are stagnated on account of the entry by the Moharrirs which caused hardships to the promotees. As noted earlier, prescription of the ratio of 1:1 has taken care of the hardship, if any. We do not, therefore, think that the High Court was right in giving the impugned directions.

The appeal is accordingly allowed. The order of the High Court is set aside. Parties are directed to bear their own costs.