

IN THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL
ERNAKULAM

O. A. No. 430
T. A. No.

1990

DATE OF DECISION 15.2.91

Sr. Divisional Personnel Applicant (s)
Officer, Southern Rly, Palghat & others

Mr. M.C. Cherian Advocate for the Applicant (s)

Versus

V. Sathyabhamma & 14 others Respondent (s)

Mr. C P Menon Authorised Agent
Advocate for the Respondent (s)

CORAM:

The Hon'ble Mr. S. P. MUKERJI, VICE CHAIRMAN

The Hon'ble Mr. N. DHARMADAN, JUDICIAL MEMBER

1. Whether Reporters of local papers may be allowed to see the Judgement? Yes
2. To be referred to the Reporter or not? No
3. Whether their Lordships wish to see the fair copy of the Judgement? No
4. To be circulated to all Benches of the Tribunal? No

JUDGEMENT

MR. N. DHARMADAN, JUDICIAL MEMBER

This is an application filed by Southern Railway for quashing Annexure A-7, a common order passed by the 16th respondent, the Labour Court, Kozhikode in connected cases C.P. (C)76/88 and other cases granting the claims of the respondents 1 to 15 under section 33 (2) of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

2. The respondents are Sweepers working in the Palghat Division in the Southern Railway. They approached the Labour Court, Kozhikode and filed claims under section 33 (C) (2) of the I.D. Act for payment of special allowances for attending unhygienic and hazardous jobs. According to them the Railway administration refused to pay them the

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allowance without any reason. The Labour Court in the common order held that the petitioners therein are entitled to the special allowances and allowed the petitions. The order of the Labour Court granting special allowances to the Sweepers is challenged by the Railways in this application filed under section 19 of the Administrative Tribunals' Act 1985.

3. The Railways filed Annexure A-2 written statement and raised preliminary objection about the maintainability of the claims under section 33(C)(2) and limitation. The relevant portion in Annexure A-2 read as follows:

" The claim is not maintainable factually or legally.

The claim for 14 years old is hopelessly barred by limitation. The law as it stands now is to the effect that each and every day's delay should be explained. As such the limitation act is also applicable in this case and three years limitation should be made applicable in the case. The claim petition is liable to be dismissed for delay and latches.

There are no orders or rules for the payment of special pay for all the Safaiwalas. This opposite party had paid the Safaiwalas the special pay whenever they were drafted for arduous and hazardous duties on rotation basis. As such the petitioner has got no existing right for the claim now made and the same does not come under the scope and purview of section 33(c)(2) of the Industrial Disputes Act. The Supreme Court, as reported in AIR 1974 SC 1604 has held that the Labour Court has got no jurisdiction to adjudicate on a claim petition under section 33(c)(2) of the I.D. Act, when the right to money or benefit which is sought to be computed, is disputed. The Labour Court has got jurisdiction to adjudicate in a claim petition under section 33(c)(2) of the I.D. Act only when there is an existing right. The Hon'ble Court of Kerala had also upheld the above contention while allowing OP No. 7680 of 87 filed by this opposite party against the decision of this Hon'ble Court in CP(C) 3/86 as reported in Law Journal 1988(2) KLT 835. Therefore, it is submitted that the preliminary question of maintainability of the claim petition has to be first adjudged prior to entering in to the merits of the case."

4. The case of the Railways is that though specific objection has been taken regarding maintainability of the claim of the petitioners under section 33(C)(2) of the I.D. Act, the Labour Court has not considered the same and granted the prayer and allowed the claims of the respondents 1 to 15 without even adverting to the said preliminary objections. The Labour Court ought to have considered the question of maintainability as a preliminary issue giving an opportunity to the parties to adduce evidence regarding the question. It is only after taking a decision on the main issue of jurisdiction that the Labour Court could go into the quantum in respect of each claim and grant relief. The refusal to adopt such a course resulted in injustice and payment of the special allowances even to those who have been promoted from the post of Safaiwalas and were not working as Sweepers during the xxxx period.

5. We have considered identical question in O.A. 68/90 in which one of us, Shri N. Dharmadan, was a member. The learned counsel Shri M. C. Cherian appearing on behalf of the Railways in this case submitted that this case is covered by our judgment in the above case and it can be disposed of with the same directions. This is not disputed by Sri C. P. Menon, Authorised Agent, appearing on behalf of the respondents 1 to 15.

6. In O. A. 68/90 we have held as follows:

"The Labour Court seems to have taken the decision for granting the claim of respondents 1 to 5 without reference to Annexures A-3 to A-5 after finding that the claim petitions of the respondents under section 33 C(2) are maintainable. The Labor Court failed to examine the eligibility of the claimants for the special pay in the light of the contentions of the railway in the objections that respondents 1 to 5 who worked as per rotation as Safaiwalas had received special

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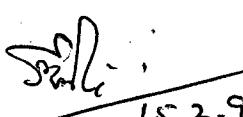
pay in the respective months from 1983 to 1986 when their services were utilised in terms of Annexures A-4 and A-5 especially when there is an indication that the respondents have received the special pay when their services were utilised by the Railway.

5. It has been submitted before us that similar issue had came up for consideration before this Bench in O.A. 75/89 and O.A. 153/89. In those cases we have considered the identical question and after setting aside the award, we have remanded the cases for further consideration in the light of the facts and circumstances mentioned in the judgment."

7. Accordingly we follow our judgment in O.A. 68/90 and connected cases and set aside Annexure A-7 the common order passed by the 16th respondent, the Labour Court Kozhikode and remand the matter back to the Labour Court Kozhikode with a direction that the Court should consider whether the disputed claims of respondents 1 to 15 would fall within section 33(c)(2) of the I.D. Act, 1947. If the findings in this issue are in favour of the respondents 1 to 15 it may further consider the claim of each respondents with reference to the available evidence and decide the quantum to be paid to them by the Railways. The parties are at liberty to produce further evidence in support of their respective contentions.

8. The application is allowed to the extent indicated above. There will be no order as to costs.


(N. DHARMA DAN) 15/2/91
JUDICIAL MEMBER


15.2.91
(S. P. MUKERJI)
VICE CHAIRMAN

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