

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL,
MUMBAI BENCH, CIRCUIT SITTING AT NAGPUR.

ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 2062 OF 2016
CONNECTED WITH
ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 2025 OF 2016
CONNECTED WITH
ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 2026 OF 2016

Dated:- 12th day of January, 2018.
Coram: Hon'ble Shri Arvind J. Rohee, Member (J)
Hon'ble Shri R. Vijaykumar, Member (A)

OA NO. 2062 OF 2016

1. Shrikant Motiram Dahikar

R/o. Sainath Apartment, Friends Coloney Chowk
Katol Road, Nagpur 440013.

2. Ganesh Kisanrao Kothale

R/o. Takli Slim, Hingna Road, Post Jaitala,
Nagpur 440 036.

3. Smt. Malti Chandrakant Chandekar

174, Shreenagar, Near NIT Garden,
Nagpur 440 015.

All are working in the office
of the Director of Accounts
(Postal), Civil Lines, Nagpur 440001.

...Applicants.

(By Advocate Mrs. Mugdha Chandurkar)

Versus

1. Union of India

Through its Secretary,
Department of Posts, Ministry of
Communications & Information Technology,
Dak Bhawan, Sansad Marg,
New Delhi 110001.

2. The Director (Budget & Administration),

Department of Posts, Ministry of
Communications & Information Technology,
Dak Bhawan, Sansad Marg,
New Delhi 110001.

3. The Director of Accounts (Postal),

Department of Posts, Maharashtra Circle,

Aakashwadi Chowk, Civil Lines,
Nagpur 440001. ...Respondents
(By Advocate Shri. R.G. Agrawal)

Connected with OA No. 2025 of 2016

1. Ganpatrao Tulshiramji Irkhede,
R/o. 535, Chitnis Nagar, Umred Road,
Nagpur 440024.

2. Bhaurao Mukundrao Wankhede,
R/o. Plot No. 189, Rajgruhanagar
Behind Manas Mandir, Nari Road,
Nagpur 440026.

3. Vishwanath Ramchandra Wakodikar,
R/o. LIG Qr/ No. 141/142, Vinkar Coloney,
Manewada, Nagpur 440027.

4. Nilkanth Mahadeo Parate,
Somwaripeth, Qr. No. 136/3,
Near Benzani College,
Nagpur 440009.

5. Umashankar Kadedin Pandey,
R/o. 84-A, Dwarkapuri, Opp: Krishna Mandir,
Post: Parvatinagar,
Nagpur 440027.

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(By Advocate Shri. S.K. Verma)

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Department of Posts, Maharashtra Circle,
Aakashwadi Chowk, Civil Lines,
Nagpur 440001. ...Respondents
(By Advocate Shri.R.G. Agrawal)

Connected with OA No. 2026/2016

1. Prakash Janardhan Khobragade

R/o. B-59, Swarajnagar, Manewada Ring Road,
Nagpur 440027.

2. Dilip Sitaramji Satpute,

R/o. Plot No. D-13, Adarshnagar, Umred Road,
Near Shriram Mandir, Behind Chamat school,
Nagpur 440024.

3. Bhaskar Marotrao Khapekar

R/o. 68, Gajanan Nagar, Behind Sainagar,
Water Tank, Omkarnagar Chowk,
Manewada Ring Road,
Nagpur 440027.

4. Vilas Rambhau Mahajan,

R/o. 36, Rautwadi, Near Shiv Mandir
behind Bhende Layout, Deendayalnagar,
Post: Pratapnagar,
Nagpur 440022.

5. Ashok Vithal Meshram

R/o. Plot No. 78, New Thawre Coloney,
Near Ratnakar Chowk, Jaripatka,
Nagpur 440015.

6. Sunil Janardhan Wasnik

R/o. Plot No. 2, Shri. Santkrupa Housing
Society, Narendranagar,
Nagpur 440015.

7. Smt. Pratibha Vijay Chilwarwar,

R/o. 342, Laxminagar, Near Dr. Babasaheb
Ambedkar Co-operative Bank, Nagpur 440022.

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Aakashwadi Chowk, Civil Lines,
Nagpur 440001.

...Respondents

(By Advocate Shri.R.G. Agrawal)

Reserved on :- 13.12.2017

Pronounced on :- 12.01.2018.

ORDER

SHRI. R. VIJAYKUMAR, MEMBER (A)

1. This is an application filed on 08.02.2016 seeking stepping up of pay for the applicant who is a Senior Accountant with the Respondent Department of Posts and who had commenced his service by appointment as LDC on 21.10.1981, was promoted as Junior Accountant on 29.05.1984 and then as Senior Accountant on 01.07.1987. The other two applicants in this case, the seven applicants in OA No. 2026/2016, and the five applicants in OA No. 2025/2016 are similarly

placed with the same issues of principle and disputes in relation to their claim for stepping up of pay on par with their juniors who were recruited as Junior Accountant and received one promotion as Senior Accountant but remained junior to the applicants in all these cases. The applicants' grievance is that these juniors have received one ACP being the 2nd ACP on completion of 12 years and 24 years of service having received only one promotion and are, therefore obtaining higher salary than the applicants despite being junior.

2. The basis of the application is primarily on equity based on the principle adopted in Government that a junior cannot receive higher pay than the senior. They contest the application of Condition 8 comprised in the "Conditions for grant of benefits under the ACP scheme" which states "that the financial upgradation under the ACP scheme shall be purely personal to the

employee and shall have no relevance to his seniority position. Further, that there shall be no additional financial upgradation for the senior employees on the ground that the junior employee in the grade has got higher pay scale under the ACP scheme." For this purpose, they draw upon precedent judgments which they claim are binding in this present batch of cases and these are listed below:-

"1. Hon'ble Central Administrative Tribunal, Principal Bench Judgment dated 01.02.2013 in OA No. 2124/2011 in the matter of All India Postal Employees Association Vs. Union of India through its Secretary, Department of Posts & Others, copy annexed at Annexure A-4, which was upheld by the Hon'ble Delhi High Court in WP No. 7421/2013 on 27.11.2013 and the SLP(C) No. 4952/2014 filed by respondents was dismissed by the Hon'ble Apex Court on 26.03.2014.

2. Hon'ble Central Administrative Tribunal, Hyderabad

Bench, Hyderabad judgment dated 05.12.2014 in OA No. 1096 of 2014 in the matter of M.Ramesh V/s. UOI & 2 Others.

3. Hon'ble CAT, Patna in OA No. 93/2007 of Om Prakash Srivastava & Ors. V/s. UOI & Ors., decided on 24.07.2012 granting stepping up of pay of applicants to the level of juniors who had received benefits of ACP. These orders were set aside by the Hon'ble High Court of Patna in WP No. 1728/2013 dated 27.01.2015 and appeal filed in SLP No. 7176/2016 was dismissed and a Review Petition RP(C) No. 1353/2017 in OA No. 7176/2016 was also dismissed on 01.08.2017.

4. Hon'ble Central Administrative Tribunal, Patna Bench, Patna, recent judgment dated 11.05.2015 in OA No. 440 of 2014 in the matter of Bhartiya Postal Accounts Officers Employees Association Gr. C & one another Vs. The UOI and 5 Others."

3. In their reply, the respondents have referred to the directions given in one of the present applications, in OA No.

2062/2016, which required respondents to consider the decisions in the Principal Bench and the Patna Bench of this Tribunal and passed a reasoned order. The respondents had taken the matter to the Hon'ble High Court and which had remanded the case back to the Tribunal and is now being considered as part of this batch of three cases.

4. They have also stated that the decision of the CAT Ernakulam Bench of this Tribunal in OA No. 816/2012 dated 29.01.2013 in the case of M.V. Mohanan Nair, Photocopier of CAT Vs. Union of India & Ors. and which was upheld in the Hon'ble High Court but has been stayed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. They have also referred to the decision of the Patna Bench of this Tribunal in OA No. 93/2007 which was set aside by the Hon'ble High Court and reinstated on appeal by the applicant, by the Hon'ble Apex Court on 29.07.2016 and claim to have filed a Review Petition but

applicants have produced orders on its dismissal on 01.08.2017.

5. They have also referred to the dismissal of an application filed by SHK Murti and Ors. Vs. Union of India and Ors. in OA No. 195/2014 dated 28.04.2016 in which the Forest Rangers in the A&N Islands (UT) had claimed MACP-2 benefit in the higher Grade Pay in the promotional hierarchy but were denied that benefit since they were entitled, as per MACP rules, only the next higher grade pay in the hierarchy of the grade pays.

6. In their rejoinder, applicants have filed the orders of dismissal of the Writ Petition filed by the respondents before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi against the orders of the Principal Bench in OA No. 2124/2011 and also the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court dismissing their SLP with the words "The Special Leave Petition is dismissed". In their sur-rejoinder the

respondents have filed the instructions received by them from their department on 27.02.2017 and details of the Review Petition filed by them in the case decided by the Patna Bench of this Tribunal of Om Prakash Shrivastava and Ors. V/s. Union of India & Ors (Supra).

7. We have gone through the O.A. along with Annexures A-1 to A-8, MA Nos. 2064/2017 and 2182/2017, Pursis filed on behalf of the applicants. We have also gone through the reply alongwith Annexures R-1 to R-7 and the additional affidavit filed on behalf of the respondent and have examined the files and correspondence related to the disciplinary proceedings and cognized all relevant facts of the case.

8. We have heard the learned counsel for the applicants and the learned counsel for the respondents and carefully considered the facts and circumstances, law points and rival contentions in the case.

9. At the outset, we observed on a reading of the orders of this Tribunal in it's Hyderabad Bench in OA No. 1096/2014 and by the Patna Bench in OA No. 440/2014 that both of them depended at the decision and the ratio set out by the Principal Bench in OA No. 2124/2011 decided on 01.02.2013. In the case OA No. 93/2007 Om Prakash Srivastava Vs. UOI & Ors. (Supra), although the CAT, Patna decision precedes the above decision of the Principal Bench and which was set aside by the Hon'ble High Court, Patna on 27.01.2015, the Hon'ble Apex Court upheld the CAT order granting relief by specific reference to the directions of the Principal Bench of CAT (Supra). Therefore, it is necessary to study the decision of the Principal bench in that reference case for taking a view in this matter. It is also to be noted that all these cases referred to the same categories of the employee filed through the association or through the individual or through a joint application.

The Principal Bench decision (Supra) was dependent upon the cases of Ashok Kumar V/s. Union of India and Ors. in OA No. 156/JK/2009 decided on 19.01.2010 by the Chandigarh Bench which reads and adopts another decision of the same bench in Madan Gopal Sharma & Ors. V/s. Union of India & Ors. 842/JK/2007 which relied in turn upon the decision of the Hon'ble Apex Court in the cases of Ram Sarup Ganda, Gurmail Singh and Harcharan Singh Sudan. The order concludes by holding that the facts of the case are covered by the decision in the Sudan case and Madan Gopal Sharma case and accordingly, allowed the application. These cases are indeed identical with the cases of applicants and that aspect is not disputed.

10. In view of their importance these referred cases are discussed as below:-

"1. In the case of **Punjab Electricity Board & Others vs. Gurmail Singh** in C.A.No.2898/2008 (arising out of SLP (C) No.5223/2004, the issue related to

differential treatment of LDCs who had been promoted after 01.01.1986 and those who were promoted prior to 01.01.1986 for the application of the scheme for grant of TBOP to higher scale of pay issued by the Finance Department on 23.04.1990. Even as factual elements in this case are vastly different, the Hon'ble Supreme Court observed that the claim of an employee for selection grade post was to be done in accordance with the provisions of the circular and the Hon'ble High Court, overlooking the provisions, exercised the power of Judicial review which should not have been done considering that Article 14 is a positive and complete scheme of equality which cannot be applied in illegality especially when the circulars were not found otherwise invalid. Denying relief under Article 136 since respondents had exercised a particular option and taking into account the stepping up provisions of FR22(1) (a), the Hon'ble Apex Court exercised its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and granted relief to the respondents while upholding the circular of the PSEB. The fact remains that the issue in this case is completely different and is not applicable to the present applicants.

2. In the case of Commissioner and Secretary to Govt. of Haryana vs. Ram Sarup

Ganda & Others 2007 (3) RSJ-154 decided by the Hon'ble High Court on 10.10.2002 and by the Hon'ble Apex Court on 2.8.2006, the respondents were employees of the Haryana Government which had introduced an ACP Scheme called the Haryana Civil Services ACP Scheme Rules, 1998. Respondents were promoted officers who were senior to the direct recruits but were drawing lower pay than direct recruits because the latter had obtained the benefit of the ACP Scheme. The Hon'ble Apex Court quoted Rule 9 of the Haryana Government ACP Scheme, 1998 which denies stepping up to direct recruits on the plea that the junior promotees drew more salary based on ACP upgradation. Since the respondents case was exactly the opposite and not barred by the provisions of rules, the Supreme Court confirmed the availability of stepping up under FR-22(1)(a) to the respondents. This particular Rule 9 of the Haryana ACP Rules contrasts to Condition-8 of the ACP Scheme formulated on 09.08.1999 by the Government of India which reads that there should be no additional financial upgradation for senior employees on the ground that junior employees in the grade has got higher scale under the ACP. The Central Government Scheme covers both possibilities of senior/junior promotees or direct recruits and its provisions have not been held to be

ultra vires. In fact, Hon'ble Apex Court in its observations on the nature of the Hon'ble High Court judgment and the limits of judicial review in **Gurmail Singh's** case underline the need to follow the rules laid down, if otherwise valid. This case is also irrelevant to the present applicants.

3. In the case of **Madan Gopal Sharma & Others vs. U.O.I. & Others** O.A.No.842-JK-2007 relief was granted to the applicants on the basis of orders of the Hon'ble Apex Court in the case of **Government of Haryana and others Vs. Ram Sarup Ganda & Others, Punjab Electricity Board & Others vs. Gurmail Singh and Harcharan Singh Sudan Vs. U.O.I. & Others**. The O.A.No.97-CH-2007 decided by the Chandigarh Bench of this Tribunal in the case of **Pawan Kumar vs. Union of India & Others** pronounced on 23.05.2008 was also based on the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Ram Sarup Ganda's** case which has been discussed above. Therefore, the utility of **Madan Gopal Sharma's** decision in the coordinate bench of this Tribunal will depend upon validity of application of the three cases cited and adopted for granting relief. Of these, only the case of **Harcharan Singh Sudan Vs. UOI and Ors** remains for consideration on relevance.

4. In the case of **Gurcharan Singh Grewal and Another vs. Punjab State Electricity Board & Others** (2009) 3 SCC-94, no relief had been granted by the Hon'ble High Court of Punjab & Haryana but by reference to the reply written statement in the writ petition where the respondent Government had accepted the anomaly pointed out in respect of the second petitioner, the writ petition was declared as rendered infructuous and disposed of as such on 23.09.2005. When the first petitioner filed a Review Petition and requested similar relief, it was found that he had not sought specific relief in the writ petition although he had been joined as party and on that technical objection, his prayer was rejected and then considered by the Hon'ble Supreme Court which directed the respondents to deal with him on the same basis as Petitioner 2 on the general rule of equity. A plain reading of the records of the case that were obtained from the Hon'ble High Court of Punjab and Haryana showed, in the writ petition filed, that the seniors wanted stepping up of their pay to the level of the junior because their dates of increment were different. This is merely the application of FR 22(I)(a)(1) and that may also explain why this case was not uploaded as it was of a completely routine nature and completely unrelated to ACP or

MACP. These judgments of the Hon'ble High Court and Hon'ble Apex Court set out no ratio or principle which could be used in deciding the specific case of the applicant which is on the difference arising out of grant of ACP/MACP to one or the other party in the case.

5. In the case of **Ashok Kumar vs. U.O.I. & Others (Direct Taxes)** in 156/JK/2009 of the Chandigarh Bench of this Tribunal, reliance has been placed upon the judgment of **Ram Sarup Ganda, Harcharan Singh Sudan vs. U.O.I. & Others, Punjab Electricity Board & Others vs. Gurmail Singh** and two cases of **U.O.I. & Others vs. P. Jagdish** in 1997 (2) SCT-664 and O.A.No.97-CH-2007 decided by the Chandigarh Bench of this Tribunal in the case of **Pawan Kumar vs. Union of India & Others** decided on 23.05.2008. After considering all these case, the decision took for reference, the case of **Madan Gopal Sharma vs. U.O.I. & Others** decided by that bench and the cases of **Harcharan Singh Sudan's** case and provided relief to the applicant. Therefore, this case also depends on the applicability of those two cases and have no independent value as reference. The case was also agitated before the Hon'ble High Court of Punjab & Haryana which referred to a catena of cases that adopted this decision for confirming this

order. At the level of Hon'ble Apex Court, the SLP filed by the Government was dismissed on the ground of delay and on merits which evidently depended on the basis of the case considered by the Hon'ble High Court. Based on this decision of the Tribunal, four other cases also went up before the Hon'ble Punjab & Haryana High Court where the orders of the coordinate Bench of this Tribunal in the case of **Ashok Kumar vs. U.O.I. & Others** continued to be upheld. Therefore, this case was effectively dependent on the relevance of the case of Harcharan Singh Sudan Vs. UOI and Ors.

6. We also note a recent decision of the Jabalpur Bench of this Tribunal in O.A.No.416/2008 decided on 06.12.2012 in the case of **V.N. Mishra & Others vs. U.O.I and Others**, Inspectors of Central Excise, stated as LDC, UDC, Stenographers etc and had been promoted once or twice but were receiving less pay than direct recruits although the direct recruits were junior to the promotees. The decision of the Jabalpur Bench of this Tribunal in this case was dependent on the decision of Hon'ble Apex Court in **Ram Sarup Ganda, Harcharan Singh Sudan vs. U.O.I. & Others**, the Coordinate Bench of this Tribunal in Ashok Kumar's case, the decision of the Hon'ble Apex Court in **Gurcharan Singh Grewal**

and Another vs. Punjab State Electricity Board & Others (2009) 3 SCC-94 and the **Harcharan Singh Sudan's** case. In particular, they referred to the decision of the Chandigarh Bench of this Tribunal in O.A.No.156/JK/2009 of Ashok Kumar and also O.A. No.1063-JK-2001 which related to promotee officers of Central Excise and concluded that those decisions were squarely applicable to the applicant in the case. They have also referred to the observations of the Hon'ble Apex Court in the case of **Gurcharan Singh Grewal's** case wherein the first petitioner had been denied any relief in the absence of specific prayer and therefore, approached the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Against one of the arguments made by respondents about the date of increment in the scale of applicant no.1 and the compared junior, the Hon'ble Supreme Court held, as a settled principle of law, that the senior cannot be paid lesser salary than junior. Therefore, the pay of the applicant no.1 was stepped up to the junior as appears to have been done in the case of applicant no.2. To recall, as discussed in the Grewal case, the Hon'ble High Court of Punjab & Haryana had declared the writ petition infructuous in view of the admission made by the respondents in their written statement in reply and grant of such relief directly by respondents to the second

petitioner. Therefore, the decision of the coordinate bench of Jabalpur also relies entirely on this precedent case, without examination of the relevance of the principle laid down. Instead, it could have been based on evaluation of their reliance for comparison and on whether any ratio decidendi had been established for use in the considered case. Eventually, as discussed above, this case also rests on the fragile relevance of *Harcharan Singh Sudan Vs. UOI & Ors.*”

7. The case of *Harcharan Singh Sudan* is of a peculiar nature. The individual had filed an OA No.768/2002 before the CAT Chandigarh Bench, which was dismissed and a Review Petition was also dismissed by the same Bench on 23.05.2008. This application had contested the validity of Condition No.8 of the ACP Rules quoted above with the rejection, and that case has reached finality with the integrity of condition No.8 upheld. Later, the applicant *Harcharan Singh Sudan* filed another OA before the Chandigarh High Court in OA No.96/CH/2006, which was considered along with OA No.97/CH/2007 of *Pawan Kumar Vs. UOI* and was decided on 23.05.2008. The decision was upheld by the High Court in CWP No.12894 of 2010 dated 23.07.2010 and also by the Hon'ble Apex Court

on 02.05.2011 on the plea made that applicant should get stepping of his pay on par with his juniors. The history of the applicant's case before the Tribunal is set out to show how in chronological terms, the decision of the Courts in the case of Ram Sarup Ganda Vs. Secretary, Govt. of Haryana intervened and became the basis for the decision in this case. The observations in the Sudan case at para No.14 has been reproduced in the CAT decision of OA No.156-JK-2009 decided on 19.01.2010 of **Ashok Kumar Vs. Union of India and others**. This para is reproduced below :-

"14. However, one aspect is to be seen. In the case decided by the Apex Court, the **State Government** was the appellant and the challenge was against the High Court judgment, which held that the higher pay scale be given to the respondents at par with their juniors whose pay scale became higher on account of the benefit of ACP afforded to them. The application was not dismissed but partly allowed and it was declared that the respondents were entitled to stepping up of pay. In other words, there shall only be the stepping up of pay and not the pay scale. The pay scale in respect

of the applicants would remain the same as of date but the pay would be fixed in appropriate stage and if there is no stage to match the pay drawn by the junior, the difference shall be treated as one of personal pay. The pay partly would be compared annually and partly would be maintained in future."

(extract from HS Sudan case)

(highlighting for these orders).

On obtaining and after our examination of the decision of the CAT, Chandigarh in this batch of three applications, we note as mentioned above and in the extracted portion (para14) that this case depends entirely on the decision of the Hon'ble High Court and the Hon'ble Apex Court in the Ram Sarup Ganda case supra as relied upon by applicants (para 3 of order). In view of our previous observations, we specifically point to the critical observation made while recording the facts of the matter for the judgment at para 8 which reads "the facts of the case of Ram Sarup Ganda are as follows. In the State of Haryana, ACP Scheme was introduced almost in the same pattern as that of the Central Government". As discussed above for the Ram Sarup Ganda case supra, when the schemes are different, the views of the Hon'ble Apex Court in Gurmail Singh case should have been

applied. Instead, wrong assumptions led to a parallel being drawn without any basis. The decision of that Bench of the Tribunal in this case thereafter discusses, at length, whether the decisions of the Hon'ble Apex Court was in rem or in personam but these are clearly irrelevant. Therefore, we have no option but to discard this precedent."

11. To recapitulate, it is, therefore, clear that the Harcharan Singh Sudan order of the Tribunal and consequently, the Hon'ble High Court and the Hon'ble Apex Court were based on the previous judgment in the cases of Ram Sarup Ganda and Gurmail Singh (Supra) where the State Government was the opposing party and not the Central Government. As mentioned above, the Gurmail Singh case has no application whatsoever to the present applicants. The Ram Sarup case is based on the strength of the provisions of the ACP circular issued by the Government of Haryana and as discussed above, are totally at variance with the condition set out by the Government of India in its ACP

circular especially with regard to the issue of seniors getting less pay than juniors as a result of ACP.

12. In the circumstances, the condition and rules as set out under the ACP Scheme and MACP Scheme shall clearly apply and any decisions in previous cases that have reached finality but involve consideration of these schemes as ordered by Government of India can only be considered to have been made in personam and may have no application to the present plea of the applicants. In the result, there are no merits left favouring the applicant and rules squarely apply against the relief sought by the applicant.

13. In view of the above discussion, these OAs are dismissed and there shall be no order as to costs.

(R. VIJAYKUMAR)

MEMBER (A)

srp

(A. J. ROHEE)

MEMBER (J)