

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT PATNA
Civil Writ Jurisdiction Case No.3978 of 2020

=====

Santosh Kumar Singh Son of Tribhuwan Singh Resident of Village-
Dharahara, Panchayat Dharahra, Block- Paliganj, P.S.- Paliganj, District-
Patna.

... .. Petitioner/s

Versus

1. The State of Bihar through the Principal Secretary, Food and Consumer Protection Department, Government of Bihar at Patna.
2. The District Magistrate-cum-Collector, Patna, District Patna.
3. The Sub Divisional Officer, Paliganj, District Patna.
4. The Marketing Officer, Paliganj, District Patna.
5. The Block Supply Officer, Paliganj, Patna, District Patna.
6. The Additional District Magistrate (Supply), Patna, District- Patna.

... .. Respondent/s

=====

Appearance :

For the Petitioner/s : Mr.Sumeet Kumar Singh, Adv.
For the Respondent/s : Mr.Alok Ranjan, AC to AAG-5

=====

CORAM: HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE MOHIT KUMAR SHAH
ORAL ORDER

2 17-05-2021 The present petition has been taken up for consideration through the mode of Video conferencing in view of the prevailing situation on account of COVID 19 Pandemic, requiring social distancing.

The present writ petition has been filed for quashing the order dated 14.01.2020 passed in Case No. 1 / 2020 by the Sub-Divisional Officer, Paliganj (Patna), whereby and whereunder the PDS licence of the petitioner bearing No. 198 / 2016-17



has been cancelled.

The short point raised by the learned counsel for the petitioner is that in pursuance to the show cause notice dated 28.6.2019, the petitioner had filed a detailed reply, however, the impugned order dated 14.01.2020 has been passed by the Sub-Divisional Officer, Paliganj, Patna, without considering the reply of the petitioner and the licence of the petitioner has been cancelled in a perfunctory manner without recording any reasons whatsoever in support of its conclusions. Reference in this connection has been made to a judgment rendered by the Hon'ble Apex Court in the case of ***M/s Kranti Associates (P) Ltd. & Anr. vs. Masood Ahmed Khan & Ors.***, reported in ***(2010) 9 SCC 496***, paragraph nos. 15, 24, 25, 47 and 48 whereof are reproduced hereinbelow:-

15. This Court always opined that the face of an order passed by a quasi-judicial authority or even an administrative authority affecting the rights of parties, must speak. It must not be like the “inscrutable face of a sphinx”.



24. In *Siemens Engg. and Mfg. Co. of India Ltd. v. Union of India*¹¹ this Court held that it is far too well settled that an authority in making an order in exercise of its quasi-judicial function, must record reasons in support of the order it makes. The learned Judges emphatically said that every quasi-judicial order must be supported by reasons. The rule requiring reasons in support of a quasi-judicial order is, this Court held, as basic as following the principles of natural justice. And the rule must be observed in its proper spirit. A mere pretence of compliance would not satisfy the requirement of law (see SCC p. 986, para 6 : AIR p. 1789, para 6).

25. In *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India*¹² which is a decision of great jurisprudential significance in our constitutional law, Beg, C.J. in a concurring but different opinion held that an order impounding a passport is a  quasi-judicial decision (SCC p. 311, para 34 : AIR p. 612, para 34). The learned Chief Justice also held, when an administrative action involving any deprivation of or restriction on fundamental rights is taken, the



authorities must see that justice is not only done but manifestly appears to be done as well. This principle would obviously demand disclosure of reasons for the decision.

47. Summarising the above discussion, this Court holds:

(a) In India the judicial trend has always been to record reasons, even in administrative decisions, if such decisions affect anyone prejudicially.

(b) A quasi-judicial authority must record reasons in support of its conclusions.

(c) Insistence on recording of reasons is meant to serve the wider principle of justice that justice must not only be done it must also appear to be done as well.

(d) Recording of reasons also operates as a valid restraint on any possible arbitrary exercise of judicial and quasi-judicial or even administrative power.

511(e) Reasons reassure that discretion has been exercised by the decision-maker on relevant grounds and by disregarding extraneous considerations.

(f) Reasons have virtually become as



indispensable a component of a decision-making process as observing principles of natural justice by judicial, quasi-judicial and even by administrative bodies.

(g) Reasons facilitate the process of judicial review by superior courts.

(h) The ongoing judicial trend in all countries committed to rule of law and constitutional governance is in favour of reasoned decisions based on relevant facts. This is virtually the lifeblood of judicial decision-making justifying the principle that reason is the soul of justice.

(i) Judicial or even quasi-judicial opinions these days can be as different as the judges and authorities who deliver them. All these decisions serve one common purpose which is to demonstrate by reason that the relevant factors have been objectively considered. This is important for sustaining the litigants' faith in the justice delivery system.

(j) Insistence on reason is a requirement for both judicial accountability and transparency.

(k) If a judge or a quasi-judicial



authority is not candid enough about his/her decision-making process then it is impossible to know whether the person deciding is faithful to the doctrine of precedent or to principles of incrementalism.

(l) Reasons in support of decisions must be cogent, clear and succinct. A pretence of reasons or “rubber-stamp reasons” is not to be equated with a valid decision-making process.

(m) It cannot be doubted that transparency is the sine qua non of restraint on abuse of judicial powers. Transparency in decision-making not only makes the judges and decision-makers less prone to errors but also makes them subject to broader scrutiny. (See David Shapiro in *Defence of Judicial Candor*³².)

(n) Since the requirement to record reasons emanates from the broad doctrine of fairness in decision-making, the said requirement is now virtually a component of human rights and was considered part of Strasbourg Jurisprudence. See *Ruiz Torija v. Spain*³³ EHRR, at 562 para 29 and



*Anya v. University of Oxford*³⁴, wherein the Court referred to Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights which requires,

“adequate and intelligent reasons must be given for judicial decisions”.

(o) In all common law jurisdictions judgments play a vital role in setting up precedents for the future. Therefore, for development of law, ⁵¹² requirement of giving reasons for the decision is of the essence and is virtually a part of “due process”.

48. For the reasons aforesaid, we set aside the order of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission and remand the matter to the said forum for deciding the matter by passing a reasoned order in the light of the observations made above. Since some time has elapsed, this Court requests the forum to decide the matter as early as possible, preferably within a period of six weeks from the date of service of this order upon it.

The learned counsel for the Respondents, Sri Alok Ranjan (AC to AAG-5), has not disputed the



position as is existing in law.

Having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case and having considered the submissions advanced by the learned counsel for the parties, this Court finds that the order impugned dated 14.01.2020 passed by the Sub-Divisional Officer, Paliganj, Patna, is an unreasoned and perfunctory order and moreover no cogent, clear and succinct reasons have been furnished in support of the same, hence, the same is quashed, however, with liberty to the Sub-Divisional Officer, Paliganj, Patna, to pass fresh orders in accordance with law.

The writ petition stands allowed to the extent indicated hereinabove.

(Mohit Kumar Shah, J)

Ajay/-

U			
---	--	--	--

