

(2021) 08 BOM CK 0022

In the Bombay High Court

Case No : 984 Writ Petition No. 15158, 15170, 15245 Of 2019, 4373 Of 2021

Gangadhar And Others

APPELLANT

Vs

State Of Maharashtra And Others

RESPONDENT

Date of Decision : 10-08-2021

Acts Referred:

Citation : (2021) 08 BOM CK 0022

Hon'ble Judges : S. V. Gangapurwala, J; R. N. Laddha, J

Bench : Division Bench

Advocate : Girish N. Kulkarni (Mardikar), K. N. Lokhande, V. N. Patil Jadhav, S. B. Pulkundwar

Final Decision : Allowed

Judgement

S. V. Gangapurwala, J

1. Rule. Rule made returnable forthwith. With the consent of parties, taken up for final hearing at admission stage.

2. In all these matters, the petitioners assail the orders claiming recovery from them on account of wrong pay fixation.

3. Mr. Kulkarni, the learned counsel for petitioners, strenuously contends that recovery in all these matters is beyond five (05) years. Some of the petitioners have retired and some of the petitioners are on the verge of retirement. The learned counsel submits that in such cases, recovery cannot be claimed against the petitioners even assuming that the pay fixation was wrong. According to the learned counsel, the pay fixation was not on account of any misrepresentation on the part of the petitioners. In such cases, recovery cannot be claimed. The counsel for the petitioners placed reliance on the judgment of the Apex Court in a case of State of Punjab and others v/s. Rafiq Masih (White Washer) dated 18.12.2014.

4. The learned AGP and Mr. Pulkundwar, learned counsel for Zilla Parishad submit

that wrong pay fixation was done and wrongly excess payment has been paid to the petitioners. As such, respondents have every right to recover the same.

5. It is not disputed that in all these matters some of the petitioners have retired and some of the petitioners are on the verge of retirement. It is also not disputed that recovery claimed is beyond five (5) years. The Apex Court, in a case of State of Punjab (supra) in paragraph no. 12, has observed as under:

"12. It is not possible to postulate all situations of hardship, which would govern employees on the issue of recovery, where payments have mistakenly been made by the employer, in excess of their entitlement. Be that as it may, based on the decisions referred to herein above, we may, as a ready reference, summarise the following few situations, wherein recoveries by the employers, would be impermissible in law:

(i) Recovery from employees belonging to Class-III and Class-IV service (or Group 'C' and Group 'D' service).

(ii) Recovery from retired employees, or employees who are due to retire within one year of the order of recovery.

(iii) Recovery from employees, when the excess payment has been made for a period in excess of five years, before the order of recovery is issued.

(iv) Recovery in cases where an employee has wrongfully been required to discharge duties of a higher post, and has been paid accordingly, even though he should have rightfully been required to work against an inferior post.

(v) In any other case, where the Court arrives at the conclusion, that recovery if made from the employee, would be iniquitous or harsh or arbitrary to such an extent, as would far outweigh the equitable balance of the employer's right to recover."

6. The case of the present petitioners would be squarely covered by the judgment in the case of State of Punjab (Supra). Some of the petitioners have retired and some are on the verge of retirement. The recovery also is for a period beyond 5 years, as such the present case is covered by eventualities as laid down in paragraph nos. 12(ii) and (iii) of the judgment of Apex Court in the case of State of Punjab (referred supra).

7. In the light of the above, the writ petitions are allowed. The impugned orders claiming recovery against the petitioners are quashed and set aside. In case the respondents, pursuant to the said orders of recovery, have recovered some amount from the petitioners, then the respondents shall refund the said amount to the petitioners expeditiously and preferably within a period of six (06) months.

8. Rule is accordingly made absolute in above terms. No costs.