

*** IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

+ W.P.(C) 2467/2015

% Date of decision: 18th May, 2015

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI Petitioner

Through: Mr.G.K. Pathak, Adv.

versus

SUBHASH CHANDER CHOPRA AND ORS. Respondents

Through: None for R-1.

Mr.Apoorv Kurup & Mr.Rohit

Rathi, Advs. for R-4/UGC.

Mr.Ajay Digpaul, Adv. for R-5
& 6.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VED PRAKASH VAISH

VED PRAKASH VAISH, J. (ORAL)

1. The petitioner has assailed order dated 15.01.2013 passed by the Controlling Authority under Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 in ALC-I/36(595)/10-ACK whereby it was held that respondent No.1 is entitled to receive a sum of Rs.1,00,203/- (Rupees One lakh two hundred and three) after deducting a sum of Rs.2,19,434/- (Rupees Two lakhs nineteen thousand four hundred and thirty four) already received from the amount determined by the said authority towards a balance gratuity along with simple interest at the rate of 10% per annum as per Section 7 (3-A) of the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 (hereinafter referred to as the Act) and order dated 31.03.2014 passed by the Appellate Authority under the Act in Appeal No. ND.36(29)/2013-P.A. whereby the Appellate Authority refused to take cognizance of the appeal filed by

the petitioner under Section 7(7) of the Act for the reason that the said appeal was filed beyond a period of 120 days from the date of receipt of order by the petitioner.

2. Mr.Apoorv Kurup, Advocate on behalf of respondent No.4 and Mr.Ajay Digpaul, Advocate on behalf of respondent Nos.5 and 6 enter appearance on advance notice.

3. Succinctly stating the facts of the case as borne out from the petition are that the petitioner is Central University which came into existence by virtue of Delhi University Act, 1922 and the said Act has specific provisions under the Statute 28-A for payment of gratuity to its employees. Respondent No.4 i.e. University Grants Commission (UGC) with the approval of respondent No.5 i.e. Ministry of HRD introduced the provisions of payment of gratuity to the employees of Delhi University through Central Universities Retirement Benefit Rules, 1967. The employees of the petitioner are governed by the said provisions under its statute 28-A for payment of gratuity and accordingly the employees of the petitioner are being paid gratuity as per the same along with the Rules as aforesaid read with CCS Pension Rules.

4. The respondent No.1 is an ex-employee of the petitioner who retired on 30.06.2001 and was accordingly paid a sum of Rs.2,19,434/- (Rupees Two lakhs nineteen thousand four hundred and thirty four) towards gratuity under Statute 28-A read with Central Universities Retirement Benefit Rules, 1967 and CCS Pension Rules.

5. The respondent No.1 herein moved an application for payment of difference of gratuity amount before the Controlling Authority under the Act. The same culminated in impugned order dated 15.01.2013

passed by the Controlling Authority whereby the petitioner herein was directed to pay the difference of gratuity amount to respondent No.1 along with simple interest at the rate of 10% per annum as per sub Section (3-A) of Section 7 of the Act from the date the gratuity became payable to respondent No.1. The petitioner filed an appeal against this order however vide order/letter dated 31.05.2012, the petitioner was informed that his appeal was not admitted due to the non-compliance of the pre-condition for deposit of the amount awarded. Against this order, the petitioner preferred a writ petition bearing W.P.(C) No.5040/2013 before this Court which was disposed of as not pressed vide order dated 12.08.2013. Thereafter, the petitioner filed another appeal before the Appellate Authority which was disposed of in the aforementioned terms vide impugned order dated 31.03.2014.

6. Be that as it may, since the short question involved in the present petition is regarding the applicability of the Act, therefore, no useful purpose will be served by remanding the matter to the Appellate Authority. Thus, the petitioner is heard on merits.

7. Learned counsel for the petitioner contends that Section 14 of the Act is not applicable in view of Statute 28-A of Delhi University Act, 1922 for the purpose of gratuity.

8. Learned counsel for the petitioner also submits that the petitioner had approached Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India for grant of exemption to the employees of the University of Delhi from the provisions of Act and the request of petitioner was rejected. The same was communicated to the petitioner vide letter No.S-42014/01/2013-SS.II dated 19/21.01.2015.

9. Before advertizing to the facts of the present case, it is necessary to reproduce relevant Section 14 of the Act which reads as under:-

“14. Act to override other enactments, etc.—The provisions of this Act or any rule made thereunder shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any enactment other than this Act or in any instrument or contract having effect by virtue of any enactment other than this Act.”

10. The Apex Court in **‘Allahabad Bank versus All India Allahabad Bank Retired Employees Association’**, (2010) 2 SCC 44, observed as under:-

“14. A plain reading of the provisions referred to hereinabove makes it abundantly clear that there is no escape from payment of gratuity under the provisions of the Act unless the establishment is granted exemption from the operation of the provisions of the Act by the appropriate Government.

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31. No establishment can decide for itself that employees in such establishments were in receipt of gratuity or pensionary benefits not less favourable than the benefits conferred under the Act.....

32. This Court in **MCD v. Dharam Prakash Sharma** [(1998) 7 SCC 221 : 1998 SCC (L&S) 1800] observed:

“2. ... The mere fact that the gratuity is provided for under the Pension Rules will not disentitle him to get the payment of gratuity under the Payment of Gratuity Act. In view of the overriding provisions contained in Section 14 of the Payment of Gratuity Act, the provision for gratuity

under the Pension Rules will have no effect.....”

11. In another case ‘**Y.K. Singla v. Punjab National Bank**’, (2013) 3 SCC 472, the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India had observed:-

“22.A perusal of Section 14 leaves no room for any doubt that a superior status has been vested in the provisions of the Gratuity Act vis-à-vis any other enactment (including any other instrument or contract) inconsistent therewith. Therefore, insofar as the entitlement of an employee to gratuity is concerned, it is apparent that in cases where gratuity of an employee is not regulated under the provisions of the Gratuity Act, the legislature having vested superiority to the provisions of the Gratuity Act over all other provisions/enactments (including any instrument or contract having the force of law), the provisions of the Gratuity Act cannot be ignored. The term “instrument” and the phrase “instrument or contract having the force of law” shall most definitely be deemed to include the 1995 Regulations, which regulate the payment of gratuity to the appellant.”

12. A similar question came up for consideration before this Court in ‘**University of Delhi v. Sharwan Kumar Gupta and Others**’, W.P.(Civil) No.5138/2014, wherein it was held:-

“16. The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 is a complete code in itself. It is clear from the law and the judgments mentioned above that Provisions of Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 shall have overriding effect on all other provisions relating to Gratuity.

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18. If the contention of the petitioner is accepted that Delhi University Act, 1922 and State ordinances are statutory in nature, however, Section 14 of Payment of

Gratuity Act, 1972, has overriding effect over the other Acts, Statutes and Regulations.

19. Admittedly, the petitioner has taken up the case for exemption under Section 5, which is pending with the Central Government, however, not granted to the petitioner till date. Therefore, in my considered opinion, till this exemption is not granted, the petitioner is governed by the provisions of this Act.

20. It is also admitted fact that the petitioner granted gratuity to some of its employees, after the order was passed by the Controlling Authority. If the plea of the petitioner is accepted that the respondent no. 1 in all the petitions are not entitled for gratuity under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972, then it tantamount to discrimination and inequality before Law, which violates Article 14 of the Constitution.

21. The Petitioner is an educational institution and employing more than 10 persons. The exemption under Section 5 of the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972, has not yet been granted to it. The payment has already been made to some employees of the petitioner under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972”.

13. At this juncture, it is relevant to consider the provisions of sub Section 2 of Section 5 of the Act which reads as under:-

“5. Power to exempt.—

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[(2)] The appropriate Government may, by notification and subject to such conditions as may be specified in the notification, exempt any employee or class of employees employed in any establishment, factory, mine, oilfield, plantation, port, railway company or shop to which this Act applies from the operation of the provisions of this Act, if, in the opinion of the appropriate Government, such employee or class of employees are in receipt of

gratuity or pensionary benefits not less favourable than the benefits conferred under this Act.]”

14. In the present case, the petitioner approached the Ministry of Labour and Employment for grant of exemption to the employees of University of Delhi from the provisions of the Act. However, the request made by the petitioner was rejected vide letter dated 19/21.01.2015 in the following terms:-

“No.S-42014/01/2013-SS.II
Government of India
Ministry of Labour & Employment

Shram Shakti Bhawan, Rafi Marg,
New Delhi dated 19th/21st January, 2015

To

The Registrar,
University of Delhi,
Main Campus,
Delhi-110007

Subject: Proposal to grant exemption to the employees of University of Delhi from the provisions of the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to your letter No.DU/124/Legal/ID /3830/2009 dated 09.10.2013 on the above mentioned subject. In this connection, it is stated that the above proposal has been examined in this Ministry in consultation with Chief Labour Commissioner (Central).

2. The Section 5 of the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 provides that exemption under the P.G. Act, 1972 can

only be given if the gratuity benefits are not less favourable than the benefits conferred under P.G. Act, 1972. As the amount of gratuity as proposed by D.U. under CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972 read with statute 28-A of Delhi University Act, 1922, is less than the gratuity payable under P.G. Act, 1972 it is not possible to grant exemption to Delhi University under Section 5 of the P.G. Act, 1972 and therefore, rejected.

Yours' faithfully

sd/-

(Subhash Kumar)

Under Secretary to the Govt. of India"

15. In view of rejection of the prayer for exemption, the statutory provisions of the Act become applicable.

16. As regards the submission of the learned counsel for the petitioner that last drawn salary of respondent No.1 was Rs.13,299/- (Rupees Thirteen thousand two hundred and ninety nine) but the Controlling Authority has calculated the amount of gratuity on the basic pay of Rs.16,789/- (Rupees Sixteen thousand seven hundred and eighty nine) and, therefore, there will be difference in the amount of gratuity, it may be mentioned that the petitioner is at liberty to move an appropriate application before the Controlling Authority along with relevant documents within one month from today who will consider the same after affording an opportunity of hearing the parties in accordance with law.

17. In the light of the aforesaid discussion, the petition is devoid of any merit. Accordingly, the petition is dismissed in *limine*.

CM No.4431/2015

The application is dismissed as infructuous.

**(VED PRAKASH VAISH)
JUDGE**

MAY 18, 2015/gm