

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

**Civil Writ Petition No.9023 of 2018
Decided on : 17.04.2018**

Prahlad Singh and others

... Petitioners

Versus

National Highway Authority of India and others

... Respondents

CORAM : HON'BLE MR.JUSTICE G.S. SANDHAWALIA

Present : Mr. Subhash Rana, Advocate for
Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Panwar, Advocate
for the petitioners.

G.S. Sandhawalia, J. (Oral)

The present writ petition is directed against the Award dated 18.02.2016 (Annexure P-1) passed under the National Highway Act, 1956 (for short 'the Act') by the Arbitrator-cum-Additional Deputy Commissioner, Faridabad, whereby the market value of the land of the petitioners situated in village Chhainsa has been assessed @ ₹68,63,000/- per acre.

A perusal of the said Award would go on to show that initially a sum of ₹16 lakhs per acre had been awarded vide order dated 04.03.2008 by the competent authority. The matter being taken to the Arbitrator-cum-Additional Deputy Commissioner, compensation was enhanced to ₹22 lakhs per acre vide Award dated 22.06.2010. The matter had been further carried to the learned Additional District Judge by way of filing objection petition, which was allowed on 25.07.2011 and the matter was remanded. Resultantly, the said impugned order has been passed.

The present petitioners are aggrieved against the non-grant of solatium and interest as per the judgment of the Division Bench in **M/s Golden Iron & Steel Forgings Vs. Union of India and others 2011 (4) RCR (Civil) 375.**

In **CWP No.29431 of 2017 'Phool Singh Vs. National Highway Authority of India and others'** decided on 12.03.2018, this Court has noticed the alternative remedy which is available and relegated the petitioners with liberty to challenge the same before the District Judge. The relevant portion of the said order reads as under:-

“As noticed, the land-owners successfully approached the Addl.District Judge, twice, under Section 34 of the 1996 Act, in view of the provisions of Section 3H(6), which provides that the 1996 Act shall apply to every arbitration under the 1956 Act. Having got positive results to the extent that the value of the land had been enhanced initially from Rs.60 lacs to the tune of ranging from Rs.65.62 lacs to Rs.1.5 crores etc., for various revenue estates, the land-owners have now approached this Court, asking for the solatium benefits qua the award which in principle, would flow initially from the award dated 04.03.2008, which has been passed by the competent authority, under the Act.

As noticed, the remedy would be under Section 3G(5), to the Arbitrator, firstly and thereafter, if not satisfied, to the District Judge, in view of the provisions of the 1956 Act. Once having done so, the landowners, as such, cannot be permitted to shift the track and approach this Court now claiming that solatium and interest have not been paid. It is to be noticed that the argument, as such, was also raised before the Arbitrator regarding the said claim, which would be clear from para 13 of the award of the Arbitrator. If the amount has not been awarded, as such, the land-owners have always an opportunity of impugning the award, in accordance with law. The Writ Court, as such, cannot be approached, in view of the fact that there is a specific statutory

remedy available. It is settled principle that once there is an alternative and efficacious remedy available, the Writ Court cannot be approached, at the first instance.

*The argument that the matter is covered by the judgment of the Division Bench rendered in CWP-25006-2016 titled Sadhna & another Vs. National Highway Authority of India & others, dated 03.12.2016 (Annexure P-2), does not help the petitioners, as the award was passed in the year 2016 and the land-owners had approached this Court immediately thereafter, claiming the benefits as granted by the Division Bench in **Golden Iron & Steel Forging's case (supra)** and in such circumstances, the directions had been issued, that the petitioners could apply to the competent authority-cum-Land Acquisition Collector, who was to further determine and pass a supplementary award.*

As noticed, the petitioners have resorted to challenging the awards before the Arbitrator, firstly and thereafter, to the District Judge and now, cannot be allowed to come to this Court, directly. The position would lead to a very anomalous situation, in as much as the other landowners would have remedy and would have approached the District Judge also and therefore, it would only lead to orders being passed by this Court, directing a decision, as such, whereas other land-owners would have preferred their statutory remedy.

Once a procedure has been prescribed under the statute, the same has to be followed and merely because the petitioners have approached this Court, the discretionary relief under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, needless to say, is not liable to be invoked. Counsel for the respondents is well justified in holding out that for necessary relief, applications under Section 34 have to be filed within a fixed time frame, as per the provisions of the Act. If the land-owners have chosen not to file such petitions, they cannot overcome the issue of limitation only on account of the fact that they have approached the Writ Court, to get over this legal impediment.

Thus, in view of the alternative remedy as such available, it is always open to the petitioner to seek recourse to his alternative remedy for the statutory benefits which are due as it is settled

*principle that recourse to the writ court cannot be made if there is efficacious and alternative remedy available. The Apex Court in **United Bank of India Vs. Satyawati Tondon and others, 2010 (8) SCC 110** has noticed the principles of alternative remedy. It was observed that it was a self imposed restraint and the alternative remedy was a rule of discretion and not one of compulsion. The relevant observations read as under:-*

“44. While expressing the aforesaid view, we are conscious that the powers conferred upon the High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution to issue to any person or authority, including in appropriate cases, any Government, directions, orders or writs including the five prerogative writs for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by Part III or for any other purpose are very wide and there is no express limitation on exercise of that power but, at the same time, we cannot be oblivious of the rules of self imposed restraint evolved by this Court, which every High Court is bound to keep in view while exercising power under Article 226 of the Constitution.

45. It is true that the rule of exhaustion of alternative remedy is a rule of discretion and not one of compulsion, but it is difficult to fathom any reason why the High Court should entertain a petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution and pass interim order ignoring the fact that the petitioner can avail effective alternative remedy by filing application, appeal, revision, etc. and the particular legislation contains a detailed mechanism for redressal of his grievance.”

Further, the argument raised that the District Judge would not have jurisdiction, as such, in the absence of the right of solatium under the Act, is also without any basis. Once the Division Bench has held that the land-owners, as such, are entitled for the benefits and has declared the law, as such, the argument raised that the District Judge would not have jurisdiction, is without any basis.

Accordingly, the writ petitions are disposed of, as not maintainable. Needless to say that it is open to the petitioners to avail their alternative remedies, in accordance with law, as observed above.”

Accordingly, keeping in view the above, the present writ petition is also disposed of in the same terms, leaving the petitioners to avail their alternative remedy in accordance with law.

APRIL 17, 2018
Naveen

(G.S. SANDHAWALIA)
JUDGE

<i>Whether speaking/reasoned:</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>Whether Reportable:</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>