

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION

WRIT PETITION NO.2474 OF 2019

M/s. Lalitha Chem Industries Pvt. Ltd. ...Petitioner
vs.
Union of India and Others ...Respondents

Mr. Jay Lathigara a/w. Mr. Mohit Prabhakar I/b. KPS Legal, for
the Petitioners in all the Petitions.
Mr. Sham Walve a/w. Ram Ochani, for the Respondents.

**CORAM : M.S. SANKLECHA &
M. S. SONAK, JJ.**

DATE : JUNE 19, 2019

P.C.

- 1] Heard learned counsel for the parties.
- 2] The challenge in this petition is to the following orders:
 “(i) Order-in-Original dated 10.03.2016 passed by
 Respondent No.3;
 (ii) Order-in-Appeal dated 25.05.2017 passed by
 Respondent No.2;
 (iii) Final Order dated 08.01.2018 passed by Tribunal.”
- 3] After the order-in-original dated 8th January, 2018 was made
by Assistant Commissioner of Central Excise and Customs
Division-II, under the provisions of the Central Goods and Service
Tax Act, 2017 (formerly, Central Excise Act, 1944), the Petitioner
instituted appeal before the Commissioner of Central Excise &
Customs, (Appeals-III). However, this appeal was instituted beyond
period of 90 days, i.e., beyond the period of maximum extendable
period by the Appellate Authority. Accordingly, the Appellate

Authority by order dated 25th May 2017 dismissed the same as time barred. This dismissal was upheld by the Tribunal by its order dated 8th January, 2018.

4] Insofar as the orders dated 25th May 2017 and 8th January, 2018 are concerned, there is absolutely no case made out to interfere with the same, particularly, since the Apex Court in case of **Singh Enterprises vs. Commissioner of Central Excise, Jamshedpur – 2008 (221) E.L.T. 163 (SC)**, has clearly ruled that the Appellate Authority has no power to condone the delay beyond 90 days. In fact, this is also the view taken by the Full Bench of the Gujarat High Court in **Panoli Intermediate (India) Pvt. Ltd. vs. Union of India – 2015 (326) E.L.T. 532 (Guj)** and the Full Bench of the Hyderabad High Court in **Electronic Corporation of India Limited Vs. Union of India & anr.- 2018 -TIOL-484-HC-AP-CX-LB**.

5] The two Full Benches have in fact held that even in a petition under Article 226/227 of the Constitution of India, High Court, should not condone the delay beyond period of 90 days in instituting the appeal before the Appellate Authority. Accordingly, there is absolutely no merit in the challenge as to the orders dated 25th May 2017 and 8th January, 2018.

6] Mr. Prabhakar, learned counsel for the petitioner, however presses the challenge to the order-in-original dated 10th March 2016 by relying upon the aforesaid Full Bench decisions.

7] In *Panoli Intermediate (India) Pvt. Ltd. (surpa)* the Full Bench of the Gujarat High Court was dealing with a reference. At paragraph 31, the Full Bench, has answered the questions which arose in the reference, in the following terms.

“31. We may now proceed to answer the question

(1) Question No.1 is answered in negative by observing that the limitation provided under Section 35 of the Act cannot be condoned in filing the appeal beyond the period of 30 days as provided by the proviso nor the appeal can be filed beyond the period of 90 days.

(2) The second question is answered in negative to the extent that the petition under Article 226 of the Constitution would not lie for the purpose of condonation of delay in filing the appeal.

(3) On the third question, the answer is in affirmative, but with the clarification that

A) The petition under Article 226 of the Constitution can be preferred for challenging the order passed by the original adjudicating authority in following circumstances that

(A.1) The authority has passed the order without jurisdiction and by assuming jurisdiction which there exist none, or

(A.2) Has exercised the power in excess of the jurisdiction and by overstepping or crossing the limits of jurisdiction, or

(A.3) Has acted in flagrant disregard to law or rules or procedure or acted in violation of principles of natural justice where no procedure is specified.

B) Resultantly, there is failure of justice or it has resulted into gross injustice.

We may also sum up by saying that the power is there even in aforesaid circumstances, but the exercise is discretionary which will be governed solely by the dictates of the judicial conscience enriched by judicial experience and practical wisdom of the judge.”

(emphasis supplied)

8] In *Electronic Corporation of India Limited (supra)*, again, the Full Bench of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh / Telangana, in a similar matter, has answered the reference, holding that a writ petition would lie against an order-in-original against which an appeal was filed and dismissed as time barred or no appeal had been preferred as it would have been time barred, provided sufficient grounds are made out warranting exercise of the power of judicial review under Article 226 of the Constitution of India. In this regard, it was also not necessary for the writ petitioner to assail the orders, if any, dismissing his appeal as time barred, be it by Appellate Authority or Tribunal in the event he chose to invoke such appellate remedy. On the scope of judicial review in such matters, the Full Bench has in fact followed the ruling of the Full Bench of the Gujarat High court in *Panoli Intermediate (India) Pvt. Ltd. (supra)*.

9] Mr. Prabhakar submits that the Assistant Commissioner of Central Excise and Customs failed to consider the submissions that the Petitioner has taken the Cenvat Credit against the Bill of Entry No. 6495990 dated 9th April, 2012. However, due to clerical mistake, number and date of this Bill of Entry was not correctly reflected. He submits that Assistant Commissioner was duty bound to furnish the correct facts from record and hold that there was no error in the Petitioner availing credit. Mr. Prabhakar submits that in any case there was no suppression of facts or intention to evade duty. He submits that in such a situation the extended period of limitation could not have been invoked. He submits that the entire assessment proceeding leave to

confirmation of demand and imposition of penalty is therefore in excess of jurisdiction and warrants interference.

10] Mr. Sham Walve, learned counsel for the Respondents, disputes the contention raised by Mr. Prabhakar and further points out that, in any case, such contention do not go to the root of jurisdiction. He pointed out that there was not even any complaint about violation of principles of natural justice. He therefore submits that this Petition deserves dismissal.

11] According to us, the contention as raised, cannot be regarded as a contention within the scope of judicial review explained by the Full Bench of the Gujarat High Court in *Panoli Intermediate (India) Pvt. Ltd. (supra)*. At the highest, the contentions raised do not fall within the scope of judicial review as explained. At the highest, the contentions raised may have warranted some examination the exercise of appellate jurisdiction, but not in exercise of powers of judicial review. In this case, the petitioner, delayed the institution of appeal and therefore, cannot expect that the this Court converts itself into an appeal court whilst exercising powers of judicial review under Article 226 of the Constitution of India. The contention as raised would require re-evaluation and re-appreciation of factual position. Such an exercise cannot be undertaken in the exercise of limited jurisdiction of judicial review.

12] Besides, we find that the impugned order was made on 10th March 2016. Even the final order by the Tribunal was made on 8th January, 2018. This petition was however, instituted only on 29th

September 2018. There is absolutely no explanation for inordinate delay in the institution of the petition. The averment in the petition is that there is no delay or laches in instituting this petition. Therefore, the petitioner, far from acknowledging the delay and explaining the same, does not even admit that there is any delay or laches. This is an additional ground for dismissing this petition.

13] Accordingly, for all the aforesaid reasons, we dismiss this petition.

14] In the facts and circumstances of the present case, there shall be no order as to costs.

(M.S.SONAK, J.)

(M.S.SANKLECHA, J.)