

07.12.2021
Sl. No.4
srn

W.P.A. No. 17735 of 2021
Archana Das & Ors.
Vs.
The State of West Bengal & Ors.

Mr. Samiran Mandal,
Mr. Abhinaba Dan
...for the Petitioners.

Mr. Mrinal Kanti Sardar
...for the Respondent Nos.9 to 12.

Mr. Pratip Kumar Chatterjee
...for the Respondent No.8/Pradhan.

Mr. Lalit Mohan Mahata,
Mr. Prasanta Behari Mahata
...for the State-respondents.

Affidavit of service is taken on record.

The Pradhan/respondent No.8 is represented.

The writ petition has been filed by the requisitionists, who brought a requisition on October 25, 2021 for removal of the Pradhan of Futigoda Gram Panchayat, District-South 24-Parganas. It is alleged that the prescribed authority sat tight over the matter. Hence, the requisitionists have come up before this Court.

According to the learned Advocates for the respondents, the meeting for removal of the Pradhan cannot be held as the period prescribed under the statute has expired.

The Court does not find any reason as to why the prescribed authority did not call the meeting. Section 12(3) and Section 12(4) of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973 have not been complied with and the prescribed period of 30 days from the date of receipt of the requisition has expired.

It is the democratic right of the requisitionists, to seek removal of their leader who has lost their confidence, in accordance with law. They are entitled to enforce such right and any delay by the authorities will actually frustrate such right and destroy the democratic set up of the body. These institutions must run on democratic principles. In democracy, all persons heading public bodies can continue provided they enjoy the confidence of the persons who comprise such bodies. This explains why this provision of no-confidence motion has been provided under the law.

In the decision of *Ujjwal Kumar Singha v. State of W.B.* reported in 2017 SCC Online Cal 4636, it was held that:

“The entire impugned judgment and order is supported with cogent reasons and there is no palpable infirmity noticed therein which would warrant any interference in an Intra-Court Mandamus Appeal. It appears that the appellant/writ petitioner resorted to taking shelter under the high prerogative jurisdiction of the High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution of India only for the purpose of thwarting the well-established democratic principles which govern the running of public institutions such as a Gram Panchayat, being at the lowest tier of self-governance at the village level in the three-tier Panchayati Raj System. In this context, one may take notice of the observations made by this Court

in *Farida Bibi v. The State of West Bengal* reported in 2016 (5) CHN (Cal) 258, while following the observations made by the Supreme Court in *Usha Bharti v. State of U.P.* reported in (2014) 7 SCC 663 : AIR 2014 SC 1686, wherein it was observed to the effect that it is the fundamental right of democracy that those who have been elected can also be removed by expressing, 'No Confidence Motion' for the elected person. In an institution which runs on democratic principles, a person can continue to be its head so long he/she enjoys the confidence of the persons who comprised such a body. This is the essence of democratic republicanism which was taken note of by the Supreme Court in *Usha Bharti* (supra).

The appeal has no merit and is liable to be dismissed along with the application for stay with exemplary costs assessed at 500 G.Ms. which shall be deposited with the State Legal Services Authority for being earmarked for utilisation by the Mediation and Conciliation Committee of the High Court."

As the outer limit of thirty days provided under Section 12(10) of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973 has also expired, the requisition dated October 25, 2021 as also subsequent actions, if any, are set aside and cancelled.

Under such circumstances, the requisitionists are granted liberty to bring a fresh requisition in accordance with law. If the said requisition is brought, the prescribed authority shall reach the requisition to its logical conclusion upon complying with the provisions of Sections 12(3) and 12(4) onwards of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973, by strictly adhering to the time limit fixed by the statute upto Section 12(10) of the said Act. The bar under Section 12(11) shall not

apply, as this is not a case where the requisition failed for want of quorum or could not be carried through.

It is further made clear that the prescribed authority shall be entitled to seek police protection and if such request is made, the police authority shall render all support to the requisitionists as also to the prescribed authority without any delay and laches. It is also made clear that if the Pradhan tries to evade service of the requisition, then the requisitionists shall be entitled to serve the same in his office through his secretary or assistant and if, such service is not accepted, then the requisitionists will be entitled to affix the same at the office of the Pradhan in addition to sending the same by registered post to the residence as also the office of the Pradhan.

Mr. Mahata, learned Advocate appearing on behalf of the prescribed authority, has taken responsibility to ensure that if any requisition is brought in accordance with the provisions of law as per the leave granted, the prescribed authority will satisfy himself about the compliance of Section 12(2) of the said Act and thereafter act in accordance with law by taking appropriate steps under Sections 12(3), 12(4) and so on and reach the requisition to its logical conclusion within the period prescribed under Section 12(11) of the said Act.

Thus, this Court does not think it necessary to keep the writ petition pending for a compliance report as Mr. Mahata

has personally assured that the prescribed authority shall act in accordance with law.

The Court finds that the prescribed authority has disregarded the earlier direction of this Court and the explanation given to the Court is not satisfactory.

With regard to the contentions of the petitioners that the police authorities have been threatening the petitioners in collusion with the Pradhan to withdraw the requisition, the petitioners are entitled to lodge a formal complaint with the Office-in-Charge Bakultala Police Station. If such complaint is filed, the police authorities shall investigate into the matter and reach the same to its logical conclusion.

This writ petition is, thus, disposed of.

There will be no order as to costs.

All parties are to act on the basis of the server copy of this order.

(Shampa Sarkar, J.)