

Jayantilal Ratanchand Shah

Vs

Reserve Bank of India and Others

Devkumar Gopaldas Aggarwal and Others

Vs

Reserve Bank of India and Another

Writ Petitions (C) No. 1188 of 1979

(N. P. Singh, Kuldip Singh, M. M. Punchhi, M. K. Mukherjee, S. Saghir Ahmadi JJ)

09.08.1996

JUDGMENT

M. K. MUKHERJEE, J.—

1. The constitutional validity of the High Denomination Bank Notes (Demonetisation) Act, 1978 (hereinafter referred to as 'the Demonetisation Act') and the legality of certain orders passed thereunder are under challenge in these petitions under Article 32 of the Constitution of India. The Act replaced an Ordinance, bearing a similar title, which was promulgated by the President and had come into force on 16-1-1978. To appreciate the contentions raised on behalf of the petitioners it will be necessary, at this stage, to refer not only to the relevant provisions of the Demonetisation Act but also of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 ('RBI Act' for short), which empowers Reserve Bank of India ('Bank' for short) to issue bank notes and imposes an obligation upon it to exchange those notes.

2. The Bank has been constituted under the KBI Act to regulate the issue of banknotes and the keeping of reserves with a view to securing monetary stability in India and generally to operate the currency and credit system of the country to its advantage. Section 22 of that Act provides that the Bank shall have the sole right to issue banknotes. Section 24, which prescribes the denomination of the notes, reads as under:

"(1) Subject to the provisions of sub-section (2), banknotes shall be of the denominational values of two rupees, five rupees, ten rupees, twenty rupees, fifty rupees, one hundred rupees, five hundred rupees, one thousand rupees, five thousand rupees and ten thousand rupees or of such other denominational values, not exceeding ten thousand rupees, as the Central Government may, on the recommendation of the Central Board, specify in this behalf.

(2) The Central Government may, on the recommendation of the Central Board, direct the non-issue or the discontinuance of issue of banknotes of such denominational values as it may specify in this behalf."

33. Section 26 lays down that every banknote shall be legal tender at any place in India in payment or on account of the amount expressed therein and shall be guaranteed by the Central Government. It further lays down that on recommendation of the Central Board the Central Government may however by notification in the Gazette of India declare that with effect from such date as may be specified in the notification any series of banknotes of any denomination shall cease to be legal tender except at such office or agency of the Bank and to such extent as may be specified in the notification. The other section of the RBI Act relevant for our purposes is Section 39 which imposes on the Bank an express obligation to issue rupee coin or notes of lower values on demand in exchange for banknotes and currency notes of the Government of India.

4. On a conspectus of the above provisions of the RBI Act it is patently clear that the Bank is the sole note-issuing authority and has the obligation to exchange those notes when demanded except when, and to the extent, it is relieved of that obligation by the Central Government.

5. Coming now to the Demonetisation Act we first find that "high denomination banknote" has been defined in Section 2(d) to mean a banknote of the denominational value of one thousand rupees, five thousand rupees or ten thousand rupees issued by the Reserve Bank. Section 3 declares that on expiry of 16-1-1978 all high denomination banknotes shall notwithstanding anything contained in Section 2 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (emphasis supplied) cease to be legal tender in payment or on account at any place, Section 4 which prohibits transfer and receipt of high denomination banknotes reads as follows:

"4. Save as provided by or under this Act, no person shall, after the 16th day of January, 1978 transfer to the possession of another person or receive into his possession from another person any high denomination banknote,"

Sections 7 and 8 of the Demonetisation Act, around which a large part of the arguments of the petitioners revolves, read as under:

"7. Exchange of high denomination banknotes held by other persons. (1)
Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (2 of 1994), any high denomination banknote owned by a person other than a bank or government treasury may be exchanged after the 16th day of January, 1978, only on tender of the note--

(a) where the high denomination banknote is owned by an individual, by the individual himself; or where the individual is absent from India, by the individual concerned or some person duly authorised by him in this behalf; or where the individual is mentally incapacitated from attending to his affairs, by his guardian or by any other person competent to act on his behalf;

##(b) to (f) * * *##

and within the time and in the manner provided in this section.

(2) Every person desiring to tender for exchange a high denomination banknote under this section shall prepare in the form set out in the Schedule three copies of a declaration signed by him giving in full the particulars required by that form and shall, not later than the 19th day of January, 1978, deliver such copies in person together with the high denomination banknotes he desires to exchange-

#(a) to (c) * * *##

Provided that if such person resides in a place not within convenient reach of any such office or branch, or if, by reason of age, infirmity or illness he is unable to attend thereat, he may forward the high denomination banknotes he desires to exchange together with three copies of the declaration in respect thereof by insured post to the Reserve Bank at Bombay not later than the 19th day of January, 1978.

#(3) * * *##

(4) Unless it appears that the declaration has not been complete in all material particulars, the Reserve Bank, the State Bank or any bank notified under clause (c) of sub-section (2), as the case may be, to which an application for exchange of high denomination banknotes is made under this section, shall pay the exchange value of the said notes for credit to a properly introduced account of the owner or the declarant, as the case may be, with any scheduled bank:

Provided that if the owner or declarant, as the case may be, does not have a bank account, the exchange value of the said notes shall be paid only on proper identification and until payment is so made, the amount shall remain in the custody of the Reserve Bank or the bank, as the case may be, to which the high denomination banknotes were tendered,

(5) Where it appears that the declaration has not been completed in all material particulars, the Reserve Bank, the State Bank or the notified bank, as the case may be, to which such application as aforesaid is made shall, unless the declarant is able to supply the omission without delay, refuse to accept and pay for the banknotes to which the declaration relates, and were it does so refuse, shall return one copy of the declaration to the declarant after entering therein the date on which it is presented and shall refer the matter to the Central Government to which it shall forward a copy of the declaration with a brief statement of the reasons for refusing to pay for the banknotes.

(6) The Central Government may require any declarant referred to in sub-section (5) to amplify his declaration to such extent and in respect of such particulars as it thinks fit and may, unless the declarant is able to fully comply with such requirement, refuse, for reasons to be recorded in writing, to sanction the exchange of the high denomination banknotes to which the declaration relates.

(7) The Central Government or any person or authority authorised by it in this behalf may, by order in writing and for reasons to be recorded therein, extend in any case or class of cases the period during which high denomination banknotes may be tendered for exchange under this section.

8. Exchange of notes after the time-limit specified in Section 7.--(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in Section any person who fails to apply for exchange of any high denomination banknotes within the time provided in that section may tender the notes together with the declaration required under that section to the Reserve Bank at any of the places specified in clause (a) of sub-section (2) of that section, not later

than the 24th day of January, 1978 together with a statement explaining the reasons for his failure to apply within the said time- limit:

Provided that if such person resides in a place not within convenient reach of the sub-office, office or branch of the Reserve Bank at any of the said places or if, by reason of age, infirmity or illness, he is unable to attend thereat, he may forward the high denomination banknotes he desires to exchange together with three copies of the declaration required under Section 7 by insured post to the Reserve Bank at Bombay not later than the 24th day of January, 1978, along with a statement explaining the reasons for his failure to apply within the time specified in Section 7.

(2) The Reserve Bank may, if satisfied after making such enquires as it may consider necessary that the reasons for the failure to submit the notes for exchange within the time provided in Section 7 are genuine, pay the value of the notes in the manner specified in sub- section (4) of that section.

(3) Any person aggrieved by the refusal of the Reserve Bank to pay the value of the notes under sub-section (2) may prefer an appeal to the Central Government within fourteen days of the communication of such refusal to him."

6. In assailing the Demonetisation Act it was contended on behalf of the petitioners that it violated their fundamental rights enshrined in Articles 19(1)(f) and 31 of the Constitution (since repealed), which were available to them at the material time, In elaborating their contention it was submitted that Section 26 of the RBI Act cast an obligation upon the Bank to make payment of high denomination banknotes whenever tendered and the Central Government guaranteed such payment but on promulgation of the impugned Act those notes ceased to be legal tender, notwithstanding the above provision of the RBI Act, in view of Section 3 thereof; and; resultantly, the Bank and for that matter the Central Government stood discharged of their such obligations. In other words, according to the petitioners, the impugned Act extinguished the debts due and owing from the Bank to the holders of the high denomination banknotes. The petitioners contended that such extinguishment of debts amounted to "compulsory acquisition of property" within the meaning of Article 31(2) of the Constitution and since the acquisition was not made for a public purpose nor adequate and appropriate provisions were incorporated in the impugned Act for payment of compensation in respect thereof the impugned Act was violative of the above article. Besides, the petitioners contended, they had a right to acquire and hold the high denomination banknotes and to carry on any trade or business by using the same in the course thereof and the Demonetisation Act insofar as it provided for non-payment of exchange value of high denomination banknotes except in those cases mentioned in Sections 7 and g thereof, it imposed unreasonable restriction on their fundamental rights under Articles 19(1)(f) and (g) of the Constitution.

7. Since it cannot be disputed that the direct effect of the High Denomination Bank Notes (Demonetisation) Ordinance, 1978 is the wiping out of a public debt owing to the holders of the high denomination banknotes from the State, the other contention of the petitioners that their 'property' was compulsorily acquired has got to be accepted in view of the Constitution Bench judgment of this Court in *Madan Mohan Pathak v. Union of India*[(1978) 2 SCC 50 : 1978 SCC (L&S) 103] wherein it has been held that 'property' within the meaning of Article 19(1)(f) and clause (2) of Article 31 comprises every form of property, tangible or intangible, including debts and choses in action and that extinguishment of a public debt due and owing from the State amounts to compulsory acquisition of such 'debt'.

8. The next question that necessarily falls for determination is whether such acquisition was for a public purpose for under Article 31(2) no property could be compulsorily acquired except for a public purpose. To answer this question we may profitably look to the preamble of the Demonetisation Act which reads as follows:

"Whereas the availability of high denomination banknotes facilitates the illicit transfer of money for financing transactions which are harmful to the national economy or which are for illegal purposes and it is therefore necessary in the public interest to demonetise high denomination banknotes."

9. From the above preamble it is manifest that the Act was passed to avoid the grave menace of unaccounted money which had resulted not only in affecting seriously the economy of the country but had also deprived the State Exchequer of vast amounts of its revenue. Considering the evil the above Act sought to remedy it cannot be said that it was not enacted for a public purpose. The petitioners' other contention based on Articles 19(1)(f) and (g) of the Constitution is wholly misconceived for after compulsory acquisition of their property by the impugned Act the petitioners' right thereto stood extinguished and consequently the question of reasonable restriction to the exercise or enjoyment of a right, which became non est, could not arise. Equally unjenable is the petitioners' contention that they were deprived of their right to get compensation for such acquisition, as Sections 7 and 8 of the Demonetisation Act lay down an elaborate procedure to apply for and obtain an equal value of the high denomination banknotes in the manner prescribed thereunder.

10. It was, however, contended on behalf of the petitioners that even if it was assumed that Article 31 had not been violated, the time prescribed for exchange of the high denomination banknotes under Sections 7 and 8 of the Demonetisation Act was unreasonable and violative of their fundamental rights. When the above provisions of the Act are considered in the context of the purpose the Demonetisation Act sought to achieve, namely, to stop circulation of high denomination banknotes as early as possible, the above contention of the petitioners cannot be accepted. Consequent upon the high denomination banknotes ceasing to be legal tender on the expiry of 16-1-1978 and in view of the prohibition in the transfer of possession of such notes from one person to another thereafter as envisaged under Section 4, it was absolutely necessary to ensure that no opportunity was available to the holders of high denomination banknotes to transfer the same to the possession of others. At the same time it was necessary to afford a reasonable opportunity to the holders of such notes to get the same exchanged. However, if the time for such exchange was not limited the high denomination banknotes could be circulated and transferred without the knowledge of the authorities concerned from one person to another and any such transferee could walk into the Bank on any day thereafter and demand exchange of his notes. In that case it would have been well-nigh impossible for the Bank to prove that such a person was nor the owner or holder of the notes on 16-1-1978. Needless to say in such an eventuality the very object which the Demonetisation Act sought to achieve would have been defeated. Obviously, to strike a balance between these competing and disparate considerations Section 7(2) of the Demonetisation Act limited the time to exchange the notes till 19-1-1978. However, even thereafter, in view of Section 8, the high denomination banknotes could be exchanged from the Bank till 24-1-1978 provided the tenderer was able to explain the reasons for his failure to apply for such exchange within the time stipulated under Section 7(2) of the Demonetisation Act. Apart from the above provisions regarding exchange of high denomination banknotes by the Bank within the time stipulated therein, provision has been made in sub-section (7) of Section 7, permitting the Central Government, for reasons to be recorded in writing, to extend in any case or class of cases the period during which high denomination

banknotes may be tendered for exchange. From a combined reading of Sections 7 and 8 it is evidently clear that on furnishing a declaration complete in all particulars in accordance with subsection (2) of Section 7 by 19-1-1978, the holder was entitled to get the exchange value of his notes from the Bank without any let or hindrance; thereafter, till 24-1-1978, he was also entitled to such exchange from the Bank if he could satisfactorily explain the reasons for his inability to apply by 19-1-1978 and after that date the Central Government was empowered to extend the period of such exchange. Such being the scheme of the Act regarding exchange of high denomination banknotes it cannot be said that the time and the manner in which the high denomination banknotes could be exchanged were unreasonable, unjust and violative of the petitioners' fundamental rights.

11. Now that we have found the Demonetisation Act to be a valid piece of legislation, we may proceed to consider whether the orders passed by the respondents, in exercise of their powers thereunder, refusing to exchange the high denomination banknotes of the respective petitioners of the writ petitions are justified or not.

Writ Petition No. 1188 of 1979

12. The petitioner is the Chairman of a relief Society which runs a medical dispensary at Surat. In the year 1974 the Executive Committee of the Society decided to construct a public charitable hospital. With that object in view the Executive Committee decided to collect funds through donations and for that purpose donation boxes were kept at Surat and Bombay. As per the Managing Committee's resolution dated 4- 8-1974 these boxes were opened from time to time in the presence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Society and the amounts so collected were recorded in separate minute books.

13. According to the petitioner, immediately after the promulgation of the High Denomination Bank Notes (Demonetisation) Ordinance, 1978, on 16-1-1978 instructions were given to the office-bearers of the Society both at Bombay and Surat not to accept any deposit or to allow anyone to deposit any high denomination banknotes in the collection boxes after midnight of 16-1-1978. For that purpose the boxes at Surat and Bombay were taken possession of by the respective office-bearers and steps were taken by the Society to open the boxes. The collection boxes at Bombay, which were opened in the afternoon of 17-1-1978, were found to contain Rs 22,11,000 in high denomination banknotes, The amount so received was properly minuted in the minute book and entered in the cash-book. Thereafter the Society obtained the requisite statutory declaration form to be submitted for exchange of those notes and along with the declaration delivered the notes to the State Bank of India, Bombay on 19-1-1978.

14. As regards the boxes at Surat the petitioner's case is that they were opened on 20-1-1978 and found to contain Rs 34,76,000 in high denomination banknotes. The above sum of money along with requisite declaration was deposited by the petitioner in the Bank in Bombay on 23-1-1978 along with a letter explaining the delay for failure to deposit the same within the prescribed time.

15. Thereafter from time to time the Society addressed letters to the State Bank of India, Bombay asking for payment of the value of the high denomination banknotes deposited. But it did not receive any reply thereto until 25-4-1978, when the Society received an order of the Currency Officer of the Bank rejecting their claim for exchange of the high denomination banknotes received in Surat on the grounds, that the Society had not explained satisfactorily its failure to open the collection boxes immediately after issue of the Ordinance and that it had not been established to his satisfaction that the notes had reached the Society before demonetisation. Aggrieved by the above

order the Society preferred an appeal under Section 8(3) of the Demonetisation Act to the Central Government. After giving a personal hearing to the Society the Central Government dismissed the appeal with the following findings:

"As far as the notes found at Surat are concerned, the Government of India agree with the Reserve Bank of India that the failure on the part of the Trust to open the collection boxes at Surat immediately after the issue of Ordinance has not been satisfactorily explained. The trustees have admitted knowledge of the promulgation of the Ordinance on the evening of 16-1-1978 and opened the boxes at Bombay on 17th of January, 1978. They could have taken similar precautions and had the Surat boxes also opened immediately, The fact that the boxes were opened on 20th January, 1978 and then declared on the 23rd of January, 1978 does leave scope for doubt as to whether the Trust was in possession of the high denomination notes on or before 16th January, 1978 and not subsequently.

The Trust has also furnished details of the collection from the boxes on earlier occasions. During 1977 the boxes were opened on five' occasions, the details of which are as follows:

Details of cash bones' collection at Surat

1977 Amount

January Rs. 18,012

April Rs. 16,161

May Rs. 56,000

June Rs. 10,000

11th November Rs. 20,051

On previous occasions the amounts were much less and on 11th November, 1977 theY were only Rs 20,051. Thus in more than 5 months, June 1977 to November 1977, the total collections were a little over Rs 20,000 which comes to an average of about Rs 5000 per month. Keeping these facts in view it seems most unlikely that the donations in the next two months i.e. November 1977 to January 16, 1978 would aggregate to Rs 34,74,519 out of which Rs 34,76,000 would be in high denomination notes. Besides the appellant had also not been able to prove that even in the past the Trust was getting donations in high denomination notes from the charity boxes and that this was a regular feature."

16. In impugning the order of the Currency Officer of the Bank it was submitted on behalf of the petitioner that no opportunity of being heard was given to the Society so as to enable it to explain the reasons for delay in submitting the declaration form. Even if we proceed on the assumption that such an opportunity of personal hearing was imperative to comply with the rules of natural justice the petitioner cannot raise any grievance on that score for the appellate authority gave them such an opportunity before dismissing their appeal, This apart, as noticed earlier, the appellate authority has given detailed reasons for its inability to accept the explanation of the Society for not filing the

declaration in time. Under the Demonetisation Act if a holder of high denomination banknotes had acquired those notes after 16-1-1978 he would not be entitled to exchange the same. If, therefore, the Bank and the Central Government obtained a satisfaction that the Society failed to prove that the high Denomination banknotes for which value was claimed had reached its hands on or before 16-1-1978 payment could legitimately be refused. It was however contended that the respondents having accepted their claim for exchange in respect of notes found in the collection boxes of Bombay ought to have accepted the explanation offered by them in respect of the notes received at Surat. It appears that this contention was raised before the appellate authority which rejected the same with the following observations:

"The Government of India have carefully considered all the facts of the case and are of the view that the decision regarding the amount found in the charity boxes maintained at Bombay which were opened on the 17th and declared on the 19th has hardly any relevance to the decision taken on the notes found in the charity boxes at Surat. The declaration regarding the notes found in the donation boxes at Bombay was within the prescribed time i.e. 19th January, 1978 and if the forms were complete in all material particulars the Bank had no alternative but to exchange the notes in accordance with the provisions of law. However, for the declarations filed after the 19th till the 24th the declarant had to satisfy the Reserve Bank regarding the reasons for delay and only if the Reserve Bank was fully satisfied could the notes be exchanged. It is, therefore, clear that the notes found in the boxes at Bombay and those found at Surat stand on a different footing."

17. We need not however delve into the matter any further, for the above findings are of facts and nothing has been brought to our notice to indicate that the impugned orders are perverse. Indeed, the materials on record persuade us to hold that the reasons which weighed with the authorities to refuse payment to the Society in exchange of their high denomination banknotes are cogent and convincing. We, therefore, do not find any merit in this petition. Writ Petitions Nos. 97-100 of 1981

18. The petitioners herein are the trustees of Tulsiram Mansadevi Charity Trust ('Trust' for short) which is registered as a public charitable trust under the Bombay Public Trusts Act, 1950 (29 of 1950). The object of the Trust, amongst others, is to render help to the poor and destitute. According to the petitioners, sometimes in 1977 one Gopaldas Aggarwal Foundation ('Foundation' for short), a trust having common trustees with the Trust started a donation-collection drive for their "Hospital Building and Equipment Fund" to be utilised for the proposed construction of a hospital. The Trust also agreed to participate in that drive and accordingly undertook sale of donation tickets of the Foundation from door to door for cash. For that purpose, the Trust received donation tickets worth Rs 3,00,000 from the Foundation and during the period between 15-11-1977 and 14-1-1978 managed to sell tickets worth Rs 1,57,050 out of which Rs 1,53,000 were in 153 currency notes of Rs 1000 each. The above sale was effected through employees of the Trust, its representatives and other persons connected or associated with the trustees, who rendered detailed account of such sale. Receipts in respect of the sales were recorded in the cash-book of the Trust as and when received and the Same was handed over to the said Foundation. According to the petitioners, no record was kept nor could be kept of the various individuals to whom the donation tickets were actually sold considering the manner in which the transactions took place. Besides, the petitioners aver, the donations were received in cash from the employees, representatives and associates and retained in the form received as the same had to be directly, handed over to the Foundation on whose behalf the amounts had been collected.

19. Consequent upon the promulgation of the High Denomination Bank Notes (Demonetisation) Ordinance on 16-1-1978 the Trust delivered a declaration in respect of the 153 currency notes of Rs 1000 each, which they had received by sale of tickets as also the notes on 19-1-1978 to the Bank at its office in Bombay. According to the petitioners the said declaration gave complete particulars of the said currency notes and also specifically stated that the amount had been received by way of donations. BY its letter dated 4-10-1978, the Bank however called for the following further details from the Trust:

- (a) Denominational details of the tickets issued for collection of donations, and the tickets actually sold till 14-1-1978;
- (b) Whether high denomination notes were directly received, and if not, when and from whom the same were got exchanged; and also called upon the said Trust-
- (c) To produce counterfoils of the tickets for perusal and return.

In response to the said requisitions the Trust furnished a statement giving complete particulars of the tickets sold by it, and produced the counterfoils of the tickets for perusal.

20. Thereafter by its letter dated 16-8-1979 the Bank intimated the Trust that the declaration filed by the Trust could not be treated as complete in all material particulars for the following reasons:

- (a) against column 15 of the said declaration form, it is stated that "the amount received as donations remaining in hand pending utilisation of the same". This seems very unusual since the said Trust had a bank account and the cash was not required for being utilised in the very near future and
- (b) against column 16 of the declaration, it is stated that "the amount was received from donors, names not recorded". This was a very vague reply and does not establish whether the notes were received before or after the promulgation of the Ordinance. Since the amount was collected from donors, it was also not convincing that all of them would like to remain anonymous though they had donated for a good cause.

and, accordingly, rejected the Trust's claim for payment of the exchange value of the high denomination banknotes. Against such refusal the Trust preferred an appeal to the Government of India which was rejected by an order dated 23-8-1979. The above two orders are under challenge in these writ petitions,

21. It was submitted on behalf of the petitioners that considering the manner in which the notes in question were received, the authorities concerned ought to have held that the particulars given by it against columns 15 and 16 of the declaration were sufficient. The petitioners further contended that no obligation was cast upon them under the Demonetisation Act to furnish complete particulars of names of all the persons from whom notes had been acquired nor were they obligated to satisfy the Reserve Bank that the notes in question had been received before or after the promulgation of the Ordinance. In all such circumstances, the petitioners urged, the impugned orders were liable to be quashed.

22. Under column 15 of the form of declaration, required to be filed under Section 7(2) of the Demonetisation Act, the reasons for keeping the amount in cash and under column 16 the source

when and wherefrom the notes came into the possession of the declarant are to be disclosed. Having regard to the provisions of Sections 3 and 4 of the Demonetisation Act the reasons for disclosure of such details are not far to seek. After the high denomination banknotes ceased to be valid tender on the expiry of 16-1-1978 transfer of the same to the possession of others thereafter was forbidden. That necessarily means that the right and opportunity of exchanging those notes was available only to those persons who were possessing the same on 16-1-1978. Therefore, to obtain satisfaction that the declarant was in possession of the notes on or before 16-1-1978 the Bank was required to make necessary enquiry and in that context complete disclosure of the particulars referred to in columns 15 and 16 were absolutely necessary. As noticed earlier, in the declaration submitted by the petitioners it was stated against columns 15 and 16 that "amounts received by donations, remaining in hand pending utilisation of the same" and "Donor's name not recorded" respectively. The particulars so furnished did not find favour with the authorities concerned for according to the authorities, as the Trust had a bank account and the cash was not required to be utilised in the near future it seemed very unusual that it would be kept in hands pending utilisation. As regards the failure of the Trust to disclose the names of the donors, the comment was that this was a vague reply and did not establish whether notes were received before or after the Ordinance. Besides, it was observed that since the amounts were collected from donors it did not stand to reason that all the donors would like to remain anonymous though they had donated for a good cause. The grounds so canvassed in refusing payment to the petitioners cannot be said to be unreasonable or unjust so as to entitle us to disturb the same, These petitions are, therefore, also liable to be rejected.

23. On the conclusions as above we dismiss all the writ petitions but without any order as to costs.