

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Reena Suresh Alhat

Vs.

State of Maharashtra

SLP(Civil)No.3350 of 2017

(J.Chelameswar Abhay and Manohar Sapre,JJ.,)

13.02.2017

ORDER

Jasti Chelameswar,J.,

1. Permission to file Special Leave Petition is granted. These two matters arise out of Maharashtra Municipal Corporation Act, 1949 (Act No. 59 of 1949). Petitioners in these two SLPs are candidates at the ongoing Elections to the Municipal Corporation of Pune.

2. Aggrieved by certain action taken by the respondents, two writ petitions came to be filed in the High Court of Bombay, one by the petitioner in SLP (Civil) ... CC No. 3350 of 2017 and the other by respondent no.4 in SLP (Civil) No.5014 of 2017.

3. Reena Suresh Alhat' s nomination was rejected by an order dated 4.2.2017. She challenged the rejection of her nomination by a writ petition. The writ petition was dismissed by the High Court by an order under challenge dated 7.2.2017 on the twin grounds of a constitutional bar and the existence of an alternative remedy.

4. In the case of Reshma Anil Bhosale, the dispute is regarding the allotment of a symbol. The petitioner claimed to be a candidate sponsored by the Bharatiya Janata Party. The said symbol was allotted to the petitioner by an order of the respondent dated 8.2.2017. One of the contesting candidates questioned the allotment of the election symbol of BJP by filing a writ petition. Rule nisi was issued and by an interim order of the High Court, the order of the Election Commission allotting the symbol in favour of Reshma Anil Bhosale was stayed. Hence these two special leave petitions.

5. It was passionately urged by the learned senior counsel appearing in both the matters that this Court ought to examine the questions of law involved in the petitions because these elections at the grass root level are of great importance in the civic administration of Pune. By the impugned orders, the High Court deprived the petitioners of their valuable electoral rights. Though the petitioners have an alternative remedy to challenge the election of

returned candidates, such a remedy is time consuming and in the process a substantial (if not the entire) portion of the term of the office would expire and, therefore, this Court is bound to examine the cases on merits.

6. The remedy under Article 136 is a discretionary remedy though it does not mean that the discretion should be exercised whimsically. Learned counsel for the petitioners relied upon a judgment of the Constitution Bench in the case of *Mohinder Singh Gill & Another v. The Chief Election Commissioner, New Delhi & Others*¹, in support of the submission that in appropriate cases, this Court ought to interfere in certain specified circumstances in the election process notwithstanding the fact that the aggrieved candidate would have an opportunity to question the election at a later point of time by filing an election petition.

7. On the other hand, the caveator (one of the contesting candidates - respondents in SLP(C) No.5014 of 2017 relying upon a judgment of this Court in *Election Commission of India through Secretary v. Ashok Kumar & Others*², argued that this Court clearly laid down the circumstances in which interference would be justified and the case on hand does not fall within the parameters indicated therein.

8. We see no reason to entertain the SLPs for the following reasons

(i) The elections in question pertain to a local body under a local law of the State Legislature. The result of the election is most unlikely to have any effect on the affairs of this nation. We are even inclined to believe that the result of the election would not have any repercussions beyond Pune City.

(ii) The High Court is also a constitutional court, subject of course to the appellate jurisdiction conferred on this court by law.

(iii) The petitioners would still have a forum for adjudication of their respective rights and granting appropriate relief if they can successfully establish the infringement of their legal rights.

(iv) The appellate jurisdiction conferred by the Constitution under Article 136 is purely discretionary.

(v) The pendency of huge number of matters in this Court coupled with the relative insignificance (from the point of view of the nation) of the injury to the petitioners herein are certainly factors which should weigh with this Court before entertaining these applications. We are only reminded of a caution given by Justice *Frankfurter* in *Rogers v. Missouri Pacific Railroad Co.*,³

“The Court may or may not be “doing justice” in the four insignificant cases it decides today; it certainly is doing injustice to the significant and important cases on the calendar and to its own role as the supreme judicial body of the country.” ...

“Unless the Court vigorously enforces its own criteria for granting review of cases, it will inevitably face an accumulation of arrears or will dispose of its essential business in too hurried and therefore too shallow a way.”

9. We regret our inability to examine the issues involved in these two cases. Special Leave Petitions are dismissed.

Judgment Referred.

¹*AIR 1978 SC 0851*

²*(2008) 8 SCC 0216*

³*353 U.S. 500, 0521 : 77S. Ct. 443, 459*