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In the High Court of Punjab and Haryana at Chandigarh

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[163]

CWP-5588-2025 Date of Decision: 27.02.2025

JAGMAL SINGH JATAIN

..... PETITIONER

VERSUS

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE, BAR COUNCIL OF INDIA, 21, ROUSE ENCLAVE, INDUSTRIAL AREA, NEW DELHI AND OTHERS

.....RESPONDENTS

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SURESHWAR THAKUR HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VIKAS SURI

Present: Mr. Sanjeev Sharma, Advocate Senior Advocate assisted by Mr. Sandeep Singh, Advocate for the petitioner.

Mr. Ashwani Talwar, Advocate for respondent No.1.

Mr. Birender Singh Rana, Sr. Advocate assisted by Mr. Manav Dhull, Advocate, Ms. Niharika Singh, Advocate Mr. Nayandeep Rana, Advocate, Ms. Anu Chaudhary, Advocate and Ms. Rahish Pahwa, Advocate for respondent No.2.

None for respondent No.4.

SURESHWAR THAKUR, J. (ORAL)

1. Mr. Kanwaljit Singh, learned Senior Counsel, who had earlier appeared on behalf co-respondent No.4, was requested to seek instructions from the said co-respondent No.4, for his appearing on his behalf in the instant writ petition. However, Sh. Kanwaljit Singh, learned Senior Counsel, after having cellular communication with co-respondent No.4, apprised this

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Court, that he has not been instructed by the said co-respondent, thus to appear on his behalf in the instant petition, but the said co-respondent No.4, has requested him to beseech this Court that about 10 minutes, being granted to him, to make arrangements for a representation on his behalf becoming made today, before this Court.

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2. However, despite almost more than half an hour elapsing, since Shri Kanwaljeet Singh, learned Senior counsel making the said intimation, neither co-respondent No.4 has appeared in person, nor has caused any valid representation on his behalf. Therefore, it appears that the said co-respondent is not interested to appear today before this Court. As such, this Court proceeds to decide the instant petition in the absence of co-respondent No.4.

3. *Prima facie,* in the passing of the impugned order, a blatant breach is caused, to the directions passed by this Court as embodied in paragraph No. 14, in the verdict rendered by this Court, in CWP No.3072 of 2025, on 04.02.2025. The said directions are extracted hereinafter:-

> *"14*. However, without making any further detailed examination of the validity of the said reference, the larger interest of justice, do require, that unless the Special Committee which is engaged in making a probe into the allegations raised by one Mr. Jagmal Singh, Advocate, relating to the bungling of funds at the instance of the concerned in the apposite undertaken construction activity, thus, thereupto the reference which is, prima facie, preceded by reasons to believe, as ordained by Section *35 of the Act, 1961, be not be actioned upon by the Disciplinary* Committee of the Bar Council of India. In consequence, the ends of justice also require that the present petitioner be directed to to produce all the relevant records if the same are in his possession, or if not in his possession, he is thus directed to ensure that the custodian thereof, ensures production of the relevant records before the Special Committee of the Bar Council concerned. The

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said be done within five days from today. Moreover, it is also open to the present petitioner to give a plausible reason or an explanation for non-production thereof. If the said reason is found to be unwarranted, thereupon, it is open to the Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council, to whom a reference has been made by the Bar Council, with thereins occurring the ordained reasons to believe, thus to proceed with the said reference. However, in the drawing of all the proceedings complete adherence be made to the principles of natural justice. Moreover, the Special Committee of the Bar Council is directed to conclude the proceedings as drawn against the present petitioner, hence, in terms of Section 35 of the Act of 1961, but within 15 days from today."

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4. Moreover, it is also necessary to extract the contents of the impugned Annexure P-1, as becomes rendered on 20.02.2025, thus by the Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council of India. The relevant contents of the said passed order are, thus, extracted hereinafter:-

"Mr. Vikas Sandhu and Mr. Manoj Ganghi, counsels appear for the appellant. We have heard the counsel appearing for the appellant herein namely Mr. Sandeep Chaudhary and have also perused the memo of appeal. It appears that nomination of the appellant for the election to be held on 28.2.2025 has already been accepted and the process of election is going on.

By the impugned order, the appellant has been registered from contesting the election for a period of three years or till the completion of the enquiry as regard the construction of the chamber.

Under these circumstances, this Committee think it proper to stay the operation of the impugned order dated 14.2.2025 passed by the Bar Council of Punjab & Haryana. The appellant shall be allowed to be participate/contest in the election of the Bar Association which is to be held on 28.2.2025. It is further made clear that this interim order is being passed in



view of the fact that inquiry is still pending and the result is awaited. The final order on this appeal will be passed on the perusal of the report of the enquiry."

5. The instant writ petitioner has a chequered history, inasmuch as, respondent No.4, had earlier instituted, a *Civil Writ Petition bearing No.3072 of 2025*, before this Court. The relevant portion of the directions, passed thereons become extracted hereinabove.

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6. The necessity for the passing of the said directions, arose from the factum, that the complainant one Jagmal Singh had raised allegations of defalcation of funds of the Bar Association concerned, besides, arose from the factum of co-respondent No.4 making allotment of chambers to ineligible advocates.

7. This Court, while making a discussion on the said writ petition, had made a reference, *vis a vis*, the factum that since the Special Committe concerned, thus was already seized with making a probe into the said allegations. Resultantly, this Court was led to pass a direction upon co-respondent No.4 to the extent, that co-respondent No.4, thus, shall within 05 days from the passing of the supra decision, rather to, if he does not produce the original records, thus, to assign a plausible explanation for the non-production of the relevant records. Furthermore, it is also stated therein that, if the, said reason is found to be unwarranted, thereupon, it is open to the Special Committee of the State Bar Council, to whom the apposite reference has been made, thus, to proceed with the said reference.

8. The decision, as made, by the Special Committee upon the relevant reference, has been placed on record as Annexure P-5. The relevant portion wherefroms, it may become cullable whether compliance to the supra has been

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rendered by the co-respondent No.4, occurs in page 65 onwards and uptill page 68 thereof, pages whereof become extracted hereinafter:-

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"In entirety of sequence, it is clear that conduct of Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry President has remained dubious throughout, be it before the Special Committee or the Honorable Court, as time and again he was shifting his stand either under the garb of lack of power/ jurisdiction of Bar Council or uttering that he is not in possession of record. He felt no hesitation to misrepresent before the Honorable High Court and even dared/managed to suffer false statement on behalf of District & Sessions Judge, Karnal. Though he was posing the record to be in some one's else possession right through, took a u turn and submitted the same within one day after the order dated 04.02.2025 passed by the Honorable High Court Besides this, he was/is scaring the members with false rumors tarnishing the image of BCPH thereby, which eventually impelled the Committee to pass clarification dated 28.01.2025 to pacify the embroil. He has allied with RO - Sh. Rajiv Gupta and gone to the extent of twisting the facts and misrepresenting before the Honorable Court on behalf of District & Sessions Judge, Karnal.

From act and conduct of Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry, in not producing the record, frequently shifting stand for avoiding providence of record, misleading the committee and Honorable High Court, suffering false statement from RO -Rajiv Gupta through Sh. Sanjiv Gupta Advocate who is real brother of Rajiv Gupta, before Honorable High Court purported to be on behalf of Ld. District & Sessions Judge, Karnal which was factually incorrect; prima facie makes it out a case for registration of FIR against Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry and his henchmen, yet taking a lenient view especially for maintaining a brethren repute, matter being belonging to advocates inter-se, this Committee finds it fit to form a committee for a fair and impartial inquiry. But as a pre curser, for safeguarding interest of advocates-applicants for the chambers, Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry should be kept away from intervening with matters pertaining to construction of chambers, which could be done only if he *is directed to be debarred from contesting election as of now, at least till the time construction is completed.*

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<u>At the same time, keeping in view the active connivance of</u> <u>Sh. Virender Pehal Ex President with Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry, outgo-</u> <u>ing President, it would be apt to keep Sh. Virender Pehal Ex Presi-</u> <u>dent away from the construction work of chambers directly or indi-</u> <u>rectly.</u>

This committee further finds it unable to eschew that there is definitely some reason best known to Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry President in non-production of record till the time he did not find any way to run off. In all probability, during this time of approximately two months, he must be carrying out manipulations in it.

It is noticeable that Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry has filed his nomination form for contesting for post of president again for the year 2025-2026. Consecutively, he has been president for 2023-24 and 2024-25. His inclination to contest the election for the third term in a row makes it writ large that there must be some personal interest.

It appears that he must have been prolonging the production of record on account of the reason that he must be elected President again and record would obviously remained in his custody and then he would be able to do the forge or manipulate it to safeguard him. There is every possibility that he would cover his misdeeds, because from the aforesaid factums, a huge bungling and misappropriation of funds are not ruled out at this stage. Moreover, till completion of construction, this bungling and misappropriation of funds is bound to escalate, if not stopped herein. Bar Custodian of advocates who are applicant and who actually deserve chambers being in regular practice, cannot turn a blind eye.

<u>At the same time, keeping in view the active connivance of</u> <u>Sh. Virender Pehal Ex President with Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry, outgo-</u> <u>ing President, it would be apt to keep Sh. Virender Pehal Ex Presi-</u> <u>dent away from the construction work of chambers directly or indi-</u> <u>rectly.</u>

<u>This fact cannot be overlooked that land beneath chambers</u> <u>is government land and sum of Rs. Thirty One lakh has also been</u> <u>donated by the Government for raising construction. Allotees of</u>



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chambers are eagerly waiting for completion of construction of chambers so that they could move in and start their office from there.

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Election are scheduled for 28.02.2025 and a new elected body may take over shortly. In such scenario, bearing in mind interest of allottees advocates, Special Committee anticipates and direct the Ros and newly elected body to ensure that construction should continue and will not be halted in any eventuality.

President has a dual responsibility on his shoulders; one being an advocate, he is expected to be more diligent, intelligent and vigilant and the other being the president, a custodian of Bar expected to carry qualities of a good leader as well, who would safe guard the interest of his members and not the one who runs money minting business in the name of serving the bar members.

9.

A reading of the above extracted pages of Annexure P-5, reveals that co-respondent No.4, was showing utmost defiances in complying with the supra directions passed upon him by this Court, nor did he purvey any tangible explanation for non production of the records concerned, wherebys, the Special Committee concerned, became ultimately led to thereins make, the apposite interim recommendation(s), which are extracted hereinafter:-

> This Committee, henceforth pass following interim recommendations laconically-

> A committee be constituted comprising of three members SIT, А. CA and two advocates for carrying out fair and in-depth inquiry into alleged bungling/misappropriation of funds in construction of chambers. At the same time, direction be issued to Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry to co-operate with the said Committee for smooth continuation and completion of inquiry. A letter, in this respect, be written to Chief Secretary of Government of Harvana through Registrar to depute officer of the rank of SE from department of PWD Government of Haryana.

> В. Sh. Sandeep Chaudhry, Advocate and outgoing President be barred from contesting the election for any post at DBA, Karnal for

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next three years or till the completion of inquiry as regards construction of chambers, whichever is earlier. Order accordingly

Matter is now posted for 05.03.2025.

10.

One of the most pointed recommendation, is that, co-respondent No.4 was barred from contesting the elections for any post of DBA, Karnal, thus for the next three years or till the completion of inquiry, as regards defalcation of funds in the construction of the chambers, whichever is earlier.

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11. Be that as it may, the Returning Officer-respondent No.3, after the passing of the impugned decision, thus has passed Annexure P-6, wherebys, co-respondent No.4 became yet permitted to contest the elections to the post of the President of the District Bar Association, Karnal.

12. The learned Senior Counsel representing the petitioner submits, that there was no valid assumption of jurisdiction by the Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council of India, upon, DC Appeal bearing No.07/2025, nor the impugned order could have been passed. Consequently, he argues that the passing of the impugned order is completely non-est. He supports the said submission through making an allusion to Section 37 of the Advocates Act, 1961 (hereinafter referred to as "the Act"), provisions whereof become extracted hereinafter:-

> **"37.** Appeal to the Bar Council of India.—(1) Any person aggrieved by an order of the disciplinary committee of a State Bar Council made [under section 35] [or the Advocate-General of the State] may, within sixty days of the date of the communication of the order to him, prefer an appeal to the Bar Council of India.

> (2) Every such appeal shall be heard by the disciplinary committee of the Bar Council of India which may pass such order [(including an order varying the punishment awarded by the disciplinary committee of the State Bar Council)] thereon as it deems fit:

> [Provided that no order of the disciplinary committee of the State Bar Council shall be varied by the disciplinary committee of the Bar Council of India so as to prejudicially affect the person aggrieved without giving him reasonable opportunity of being heard.]"

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13. A perusal thereof reveals, that any person aggrieved by an order of the Disciplinary Committee of the State Bar Council, is provided with a liberty to within 60 days from the date of communication of the passing of the said order, thus make an appeal thereagainst before the Bar Council of India, whereupon alone, the said appeal thus becomes amenable to become adjudicated by the Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council of India.

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14. Now, since in the instant case, the Special Committee which became constituted in terms of Sections 6 and 10 of the Advocates Act, 1961, provisions whereof become extracted hereinafter, thus to make a probe into allegation(s) raised against co-respondent No.4, rather has made the supra interim recommendation(s) to the Disciplinary Committee of the State Bar Council, rather vis-a-vis co-respondent No. 4, but has not imposed any punishment upon co-respondent No. 4. Consequently, when also yet the Disciplinary Committee of the State Bar Council, has not proceeded to undertake the further exercise of agreeing or disagreeing with the recommendation(s) made to it, by the Special Committee concerned, nor reiteratedly when any punishment was imposed upon Co-respondent No. 4, by the Disciplinary Committee of the State Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana, therebys, when there was non rendition of any order in terms of sub-Section (2) of the said Act, thus by the Disciplinary Committee of the State Bar Council, thereupon, there was no valid assumption of jurisdiction, on the said appeal, by the Disciplinary Committee of Bar Council of India.

> "6. Functions of State Bar Councils.—(1) The functions of a State Bar Council shall be—

> > (a) to admit persons as advocates on its roll;

(b) to prepare and maintain such roll;

(c) to entertain and determine cases of misconduct against advocates on its roll;

(d) to safeguard the rights, privileges and interests of advocates on its roll;

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[(dd) to promote the growth of Bar Associations for the purposes of effective implementation of the welfare schemes referred to in clause (a) of sub-section (2) of this section and clause (a) of sub-section (2) of section 7;]

(e) to promote and support law reform;

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[(ee) to conduct seminars and organise talks on legal topics by eminent jurists and publish journals and papers of legal interest;

(eee) to organise legal aid to the poor in the prescribed manner;]

(f) to manage and invest the funds of the Bar Council;

(g) to provide for the election of its members;

[(gg) to visit and inspect Universities in accordance with the directions given under clause (i) of sub-section (1) of section 7;]

(h) to perform all other functions conferred on it by or under this Act;

(i) to do all other things necessary for discharging the aforesaid functions.

[(2) xxxxx

10. Constitution of committees other than disciplinary committees.—(1) A State Bar Council shall constitute the following standing committees, namely:—

(a) an executive committee consisting of five members elected by the Council from amongst its members;

(b) an enrolment committee consisting of three members elected by the Council from amongst its members.

(2) The Bar Council of India shall constitute the following standing committees, namely:—

(a) an executive committee consisting of nine members elected by the Council from amongst its members;

(b) a legal education committee consisting of ten members, of whom five shall be persons elected by the Council from amongst its members and five shall be persons co- opted by the Council who are not members thereof.

(3) A State Bar Council and the Bar Council of India may constitute from amongst its members such other committees as it may deem necessary for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Act.



[10A. Transaction of business by Bar Councils and committees thereof.—

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3[(1) The Bar Council of India shall meet at New Delhi or at such other place as it may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, determine.

(2) A State Bar Council shall meet at its headquarters or at such other place as it may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, determine.]

(3) The committees other than disciplinary committees constituted by the Bar Councils shall meet at the headquarters of the respective Bar Councils.

- (4) Every Bar Council and every committee thereof except the disciplinary committees shall observe such rules of procedure in regard to the transaction of business at their meetings as may be prescribed.
- (5) The disciplinary committees constituted under section 9 shall meet at such times and places and shall observe such rules of procedure in regard to the transaction of business at their meetings as may be prescribed.]

15. As such, when only on account of co-respondent No. 4 rather not cooperating to the fullest extent with the Special Committee concerned, for thus enabling the said Special Committee, to unmask the truth of the allegations (supra) raised by the complainant one Jagmal Singh, that the supra extracted interim recommendations have been passed. Resultantly, when the Special Committee has not completed its probe into the allegations raised by the complainant, nor when post thereto, any final report with any final recommendations thereins, becomes referred to the disciplinary committee of the Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana. In sequel, the said passed interim order when ultimately has not resulted, qua in terms of Section 37 of the Act of 1961, in the passing of an order, thus imposing any punishment upon co-respondent No.4. Therefore, when the Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council of India, becomes empowered to enter upon an appeal, or to make an adjudication thereons, but yet when the said

(14) A.



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bestowed jurisdiction, thus is required to stem from an order imposing punishment upon co-respondent No.4. However, when no such punishment has been imposed by the Disciplinary Authority of the Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana, upon, co-respondent No. 4, nor when the instant appeal was raisable thereagainst. Moreover, reiteratedly, when only in the wake of a punishment being awarded to respondent No.4, thus by the Disciplinary Committee of the State Bar Council concerned, rather would bestow a privilege both upon co-respondent No.4, and, concomitantly upon the Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council of India, to entertain the said appeal and to also decide the same.

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16. The reason for stating so becomes comprised in the factum that when sub-Section (2) of Section 37 of the Act of 1961, vests jurisdiction in Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council of India, to hear an appeal against an order, thus, awarding punishment by the Disciplinary Committee of the State Bar Council concerned. Therefore, when the jurisdiction bestowed upon the disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council of India, to also vary the order imposing the apposite punishment, as may have been purportedly imposed upon co-respondent No.4, was so exercisable then alone, besides when then alone the said imposed punishment could be varied in terms of sub Section (2) of Section 37 of the Act of 1961.

17. However, when the Special Committee concerned, has not yet completed its probe, nor has made any final recommendations to the Disciplinary committee of the Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana, nor when the latter has proceeded to impose any punishment upon co-respondent No 4. Resultantly, no jurisdiction became foisted upon the Disciplinary committee of the Bar Council of India, either to entertain the appeal, or to pass any order thereon. As such, therebys, the impugned order is made on an ill-constituted appeal, besides, the same is non-est.

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18. Additionally, the Special Committee concerned, which has drawn an interim report, thus with the supra interim recommendation, and, also with thereins becoming proclaimed, the open defiances of the co-respondent concerned, against his rendering the fullest cooperation to the Special Committee concerned, to enable the latter to well engage itself in making an intensive probe vis-a-vis the defalcation of funds of the Bar Association, Karnal, besides, to make a probe relating to ineligible advocates becoming allotted chambers. Resultantly, when in terms of the supra extracted directions, there was an endowment of a right qua the Special Committee to thereupon pass such orders, as deemed fit, against co-respondent concerned, and, which has been so done through the passing of Annexure P-5.

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19. As such, the above extracted relevant portion of the interim directions, do prima facie magnify, that co-respondent No.4, has *prima facie* acted in conflict with the provisions embodied in sub-Section (1) of Section 6 of the Act of 1961. Furthermore, when in terms of the empowerment vested, through the mandate occurring in sub-Section (3) of Section 10 of the Act of 1961, in the Bar Council of Punjab and Haryana, to constitute from amongst his members any other Committee, as deemed necessary for carrying out the provisions of the Act, thus, the Special Committee has been constituted.

20. As such, when the constitution of the Special committee was both for forwarding the probe into the supra allegations, besides was for protecting the statutory interests of the legal fraternity, as, become detailed in Section 6 of the Act of 1961, whereupons, with the Special Committee concerned, thus making the supra interim report with thereins delineated interim directions. Since there-froms, *prima facie* it becomes crystal clear, that there was but a plain speaking/omission on the part of co-respondent No. 4, to cooperate in the relevant probe, as became embarked upon by the special Committee concerned. Therefore

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therebys, there is prima facie acquiescence by co-respondent No.4, to the veracity of the allegations made against him, wherebys, also prima facie at this stage, the said allegations until they further become cogently established, through some more intensive probe being carried out, thus do becomes tentatively established.

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21. Resultantly therebys, the debarment of co-respondent No.4 from contesting elections to the office of President of the District Bar Association concerned, is imperative, *prima facie,* both for protecting the interests of legal fraternity, and, for also ensuring the passing of the final recommendations/report.

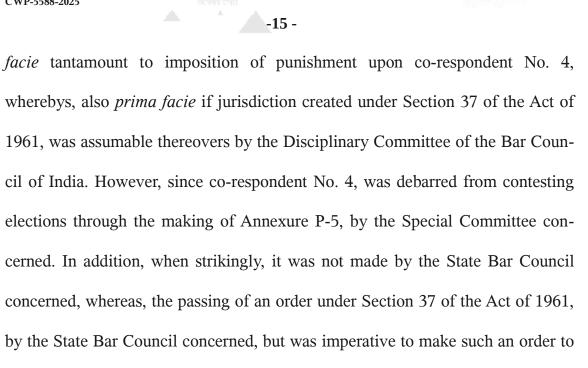
22. Since through the interim recommendations co-respondent No.4, becomes also debarred from contesting elections to the office of President of the District Bar Association concerned, which prima facie for above-stated reasons has some more validity, therebys, though *prima facie*, no punishment has been imposed upon him, to the extent that his licence has been cancelled. Resultantly the said passed order was prima facie, rather not appealable.

23. Consequently, only when punishment becoming imposed upon him or upon imposition of punishment to the supra extent, or some more severe punishment, thus becoming imposed upon him, thereupon, there was bestowment of a jurisdiction in the Disciplinary Committee of the Bar Council concerned, to entertain the appeal and to make an order thereons. However, since excepting the supra interim recommendations, no further punishment has been imposed upon co-respondent No. 4, therebys, there was no jurisdiction in the supra, to entertain the appeal, and, to pass any order thereons.

24. The most significant and striking effect of the above, is that, Annexure P-6, was passed, post the impugned decision becoming recorded, therebys too, even if it is assumed that therebys the co-respondent No.4, was debarred from contesting the elections to the post of President of the District Bar Association concerned, and, even if assuming the said debarment, may *prima*

be appealable.

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25. Therefore, since no order in terms of the interim recommendations, made by the Special Committee, thus, has been rendered by the State Bar Council concerned. Consequently, the said interim recommendation(s) could not become the bedrock of a well constituted appeal rather the instant appeal as made thereagainst but was immature. In sequel, even on the said ground, the impugned order is required to be quashed and set aside, with a direction to the Disciplinary Committee of the State Bar Council, to forthwith lawfully act upon the interim recommendations as made by the Special Committee, but after granting an opportunity of personal hearing to co-respondent No.4.

26. Last but not the least, it is not at all evident from a reading of the impugned order, that the said order was passed despite the Appellate Body becoming awakened vis-a-vis the supra directions becoming passed by this Court. If so, the impugned order appears, prima facie, to have been obtained by the co-respondent No. 4, through his practicing the vices of *suppressio veri/ suggestio falsi*. If so, the said ill practices indulged into by co-respondent No. 4 are extremely disturbing.

27. Even otherwise, the interim directions made by the Special Committee through Annexure P-5, are made in pursuance to the directions passed

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by this Court, and, unless the directions passed by this Court were annulled or set aside by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, thus thereupto, they acquired binding and conclusive force. Resultantly even on the said premise the Bar Council of India, thus had no jurisdiction, until the Hon'ble Supreme Court had reversed the supra extracted directions, as became passed by this Court, thus to either entertain the appeal bearing No. 07/2025 nor had the jurisdiction to pass the impugned order.

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28. Furthermore, it also appears that the Returning Officer concerned, has ill abided by the interim order, than to the hereinabove directions passed by this Court. In case, he was under some confusion, as to whether he has to comply with the impugned order, or vis-a-vis the directions passed by this Court, therebys, he was required to move an application for seeking a clarification from this Court. However, he failed to do so. Though the said amounts to some misconduct on the part of the Returning Officer concerned, but yet this Court refrains from drawing any stringent action against the Returning Officer concerned.

29. Keeping in view the special facts and circumstances in the instant case, this Court after finding merit in the instant petition, thus, allows the same. Consequently, the impugned order is quashed and set aside.

30. All pending application(s), if any, stands disposed of accordingly.

(SURESHWAR THAKUR) JUDGE

(VIKAS SURI) JUDGE

27.02.2025 Anjal

Whether speaking/reasoned : Whether reportable :

Yes/No Yes/No