

(B)

अपीलीय न्यायाधिकरण के समक्ष अपील, जिस अधिनियम, 1994 की धारा 86(1) के अंतर्गत सेवाकर नियमवाली, 1994 के नियम 9(1) के तहत निर्धारित प्रपत्र S.T.-5 में बार प्रतियों में की जा सकती एवं उसके साथ जिस आदेश के विरुद्ध अपील की गयी हो, उसकी प्रति साथ में संलग्न करें (उनमें से एक प्रति प्रमाणित होनी चाहिए) और इनमें से कम से कम एक प्रति के साथ, जहां सेवाकर की मांग, ब्याज की मांग और लगाया गया जुर्माना, रुपए 5 लाख या उससे कम, 5 लाख रुपए या 50 लाख रुपए तक अथवा 50 लाख रुपए से अधिक है तो क्रमशः 1,000/- रुपये, 5,000/- रुपये अथवा 10,000/- रुपये का निर्धारित जमा शुल्क की प्रति संलग्न करें। निर्धारित शुल्क का भुगतान, संबंधित अपीलीय न्यायाधिकरण की शाखा के सहायक रजिस्ट्रार के नाम से किसी भी सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंक द्वारा जारी रेखांकित बैंक ड्राफ्ट द्वारा किया जाना चाहिए। संबंधित ड्राफ्ट का भुगतान, बैंक की उस शाखा में होना चाहिए जहां संबंधित अपीलीय न्यायाधिकरण की शाखा स्थित है। स्वयं आदेश (स्टे ऑर्डर) के लिए आवेदन-पत्र के साथ 500/- रुपए का निर्धारित शुल्क जमा करना होगा।

The appeal under sub section (1) of Section 86 of the Finance Act, 1994, to the Appellate Tribunal Shall be filed in quadruplicate in Form S.T.5 as prescribed under Rule 9(1) of the Service Tax Rules, 1994, and shall be accompanied by a copy of the order appealed against (one of which shall be certified copy) and should be accompanied by a fees of Rs. 1000/- where the amount of service tax & interest demanded & penalty levied of Rs. 5 Lakhs or less, Rs.5000/- where the amount of service tax & interest demanded & penalty levied is more than five lakhs but not exceeding Rs. Fifty Lakhs, Rs.10,000/- where the amount of service tax & interest demanded & penalty levied is more than fifty Lakhs rupees, in the form of crossed bank draft in favour of the Assistant Registrar of the bench of nominated Public Sector Bank of the place where the bench of Tribunal is situated. / Application made for grant of stay shall be accompanied by a fee of Rs.500/-.

...2...

(i)

वित्त अधिनियम, 1994 की धारा 86 की उप-धाराओं (2) एवं (2A) के अंतर्गत दर्ज की गयी अपील, सेवाकर नियमवाली, 1994, के नियम 9(2) एवं 9(2A) के तहत निर्धारित प्रपत्र S.T.-7 में की जा सकती एवं उसके साथ अप्रयुक्त, केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क अथवा अप्रयुक्त (अपील), केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क द्वारा पारित आदेश की प्रतियाँ संलग्न करें (उनमें से एक प्रति प्रमाणित होनी चाहिए) और अप्रयुक्त द्वारा सहायक अप्रयुक्त अथवा उपायुक्त, केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क/ सेवाकर, को अपीलीय न्यायाधिकरण को आवेदन दर्ज करने का निर्देश देने वाले आदेश की प्रति भी साथ में संलग्न करनी होगी। / The appeal under sub section (2) and (2A) of the section 86 of the Finance Act 1994, shall be filed in Form ST.7 as prescribed under Rule 9 (2) & 9(2A) of the Service Tax Rules, 1994 and shall be accompanied by a copy of order of Commissioner Central Excise or Commissioner, Central Excise (Appeals) (one of which shall be a certified copy) and copy of the order passed by the Commissioner authorizing the Assistant Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner of Central Excise/ Service Tax to file the appeal before the Appellate Tribunal.

(ii)

सीमा शुल्क, केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क एवं सेवाकर अपीलीय प्राधिकरण (सेस्टेट) के प्रति अपीलों के मामले में केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क अधिनियम 1944 की धारा 35एफ के अंतर्गत, जो की वित्तीय अधिनियम, 1994 की धारा 83 के अंतर्गत सेवाकर को भी लागू की गई है, इस आदेश के प्रति अपीलीय प्राधिकरण में अपील करते समय उत्पाद शुल्क/सेवा कर मांग के 10 प्रतिशत (10%), जब मांग एवं जुर्माना विवादित है, या जुर्माना, जब केवल जुर्माना विवादित है, का भुगतान किया जाए, बशर्ते कि इस धारा के अंतर्गत जमा कि जाने वाली अपेक्षित देय राशि दस करोड़ रुपए से अधिक न हो।

- (i) केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क एवं सेवाकर के अंतर्गत "मांग किए गए शुल्क" में निम्न शामिल है
- (ii) धारा 11 डी के अंतर्गत रकम
- (iii) सेनबेट जमा की ली गई गलत राशि
- (iv) सेनबेट जमा निवामवली के नियम 6 के अंतर्गत देय रकम

- बशर्ते यह कि इस धारा के प्रावधान वित्तीय (सं-2) अधिनियम 2014 के आरंभ से पूर्व किसी अपीलीय प्राधिकारी के समक्ष विचाराधीन स्वयं अर्जी एवं अपील को लागू नहीं होगा।

For an appeal to be filed before the CESTAT, under Section 35F of the Central Excise Act, 1944 which is also made applicable to Service Tax under Section 83 of the Finance Act, 1994, an appeal against this order shall lie before the Tribunal on payment of 10% of the duty demanded where duty or duty and penalty are in dispute, or penalty, where penalty alone is in dispute, provided the amount of pre-deposit payable would be subject to a ceiling of Rs. 10 Crores,

Under Central Excise and Service Tax, "Duty Demanded" shall include :

- (i) amount determined under Section 11 D;
- (ii) amount of erroneous Cenvat Credit taken;
- (iii) amount payable under Rule 6 of the Cenvat Credit Rules

- provided further that the provisions of this Section shall not apply to the stay application and appeals pending before any appellate authority prior to the commencement of the Finance (No.2) Act, 2014.

(C)

भारत सरकार को पुनरीक्षण आवेदन :

Revision application to Government of India:

इस आदेश की पुनरीक्षणयाचिका निम्नलिखित मामलों में, केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क अधिनियम, 1994 की धारा 35EE के प्रथमपरंतुक के अंतर्गत अवर सचिव, भारत सरकार, पुनरीक्षण आवेदन ईकाई, वित्त मंत्रालय, राजस्व विभाग, चौथी मंजिल, जीवन् दीप भवन, संसद मार्ग, नई दिल्ली-110001, को किया जाना चाहिए।

A revision application lies to the Under Secretary to the Government of India, Revision Application Unit, Ministry of Finance, Department of Revenue, 4th Floor, Jeevan Deep Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001 under Section 35EE of the CEA 1944 in respect of the following case, governed by first proviso to sub-section (1) of Section-35B ibid:

(i)

यदि माल के किसी नुकसान के मामले में, जहां नुकसान किसी माल को किसी कारखाने से भंडार गृह के पार्ययन के दौरान या किसी अन्य कारखाने या फिर किसी एक भंडार गृह से दूसरे भंडार गृह पार्ययन के दौरान, या किसी भंडार गृह में या भंडारण में माल के प्रसंस्करण के दौरान, किसी कारखाने या किसी भंडार गृह में माल के नुकसान के मामले में। / In case of any loss of goods, where the loss occurs in transit from a factory to a warehouse or to another factory or from one warehouse to another during the course of processing of the goods in a warehouse or in storage whether in a factory or in a warehouse

(ii)

भारत के बाहर किसी राष्ट्र या क्षेत्र को निर्यात कर रहे माल के विनिर्माण में प्रयुक्त कच्चे माल पर भरी गई केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क के छूट (रिबेट) के मामले में, जो भारत के बाहर किसी राष्ट्र या क्षेत्र को निर्यात की गयी है। / In case of rebate of duty of excise on goods exported to any country or territory outside India of on excisable material used in the manufacture of the goods which are exported to any country or territory outside India.

(iii)

यदि उत्पाद शुल्क का भुगतान किए बिना भारत के बाहर, नेपाल या भूटान को माल निर्यात किया गया है। / In case of goods exported outside India export to Nepal or Bhutan, without payment of duty.

(iv)

सुनिश्चित उत्पाद के उत्पादन शुल्क के भुगतान के लिए जो अर्द्धी केडीट इस अधिनियम एवं इसके विभिन्न प्रावधानों के तहत मान्य की गई है और ऐसे आदेश जो अप्रयुक्त (अपील) के द्वारा वित्त अधिनियम (नं-2), 1998 की धारा 109 के द्वारा नियत की गई तारीख अथवा समयावधि पर या बाद में पारित किए गए हैं। / Credit of any duty allowed to be utilized towards payment of excise duty on final products under the provisions of this Act or the Rules made there under such order is passed by the Commissioner (Appeals) on or after, the date appointed under Sec. 109 of the Finance (No.2) Act, 1998.

(v)

उपरोक्त आवेदन की दो प्रतियां प्रपत्र संख्या EA-8 में, जो की केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क (अपील) नियमवाली, 2001, के नियम 9 के अंतर्गत विनिर्दिष्ट है, इस आदेश के संशोधन के 3 माह के अंतर्गत की जानी चाहिए। उपरोक्त आवेदन के साथ मूल आदेश व अपील आदेश की दो प्रतियां संलग्न की जानी चाहिए साथ ही केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क अधिनियम, 1944 की धारा 35-EE के तहत निर्धारित शुल्क की अदायगी के साक्ष्य के तौर पर TR-6 की प्रति संलग्न की जानी चाहिए। / The above application shall be made in duplicate in Form No. EA-8 as specified under Rule, 9 of Central Excise (Appeals) Rules, 2001 within 3 months from the date on which the order sought to be appealed against is communicated and shall be accompanied by two copies each of the OIO and Order-In-Appeal. It should also be accompanied by a copy of TR-6 Challan evidencing payment of prescribed fee as prescribed under Section 35-EE of CEA, 1944, under Major Head of Account.

(vi)

पुनरीक्षण आवेदन के साथ निम्नलिखित निर्धारित शुल्क की अदायगी की जानी चाहिए। / जहां संलग्न रकम एक लाख रुपये या उससे कम हो तो रुपये 200/- का भुगतान किया जाए और यदि संलग्न रकम एक लाख रुपये से ज्यादा हो तो रुपये 1000 -/ का भुगतान किया जाए। / The revision application shall be accompanied by a fee of Rs. 200/- where the amount involved in Rupees One Lac or less and Rs. 1000/- where the amount involved is more than Rupees One Lac.

यदि इस आदेश में कई मूल आदेशों का समावेश है तो प्रत्येक मूल आदेश के लिए शुल्क का भुगतान, उपर्युक्त ढंग से किया जाना चाहिये। इस तथ्य के होते हुए भी, जो कि निम्नलिखित कार्य से बचने के लिए यथास्थिति अपीलीय न्यायाधिकरण को एक अपील या केन्द्रीय सरकार को एक आवेदन किया जाता है। / In case of the order covers various numbers of order-in Original, fee for each O.I.O. should be paid in the aforesaid manner, notwithstanding the fact that the one appeal to the Appellate Tribunal or the one application to the Central Govt. As the case may be, is filled to avoid scriptoria work if excising Rs. 1 lakh fee of Rs. 100/- for each.

संबन्धित न्यायालय शुल्क अधिनियम, 1975, के अनुसूची-1 के अनुसार मूल आदेश एवं स्वयं आदेश की प्रति पर निर्धारित 6.50 रुपये का न्यायालय शुल्क टिकिट लगा होना चाहिए। / One copy of application or O.I.O. as the case may be, and the order of the adjudicating authority shall bear a



court fee stamp of Rs.6.50 as prescribed under Schedule-I in terms of the Court Fee Act,1975, as amended.

- (F) सीमा शुल्क, केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क एवं सेवाकर अपीलार्थि न्यायाधिकरण (कार्य विधि) नियमावली, 1982 में वर्णित एवं अन्य संबन्धित मामलों को सम्मिलित करने वाले नियमों की ओर भी ध्यान आकर्षित किया जाता है। / Attention is also invited to the rules covering these and other related matters contained in the Customs, Excise and Service Appellate Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1982.
- (G) उच्च अपीलीय प्राधिकारी को अपील दाखिल करने से संबंधित व्यापक, विस्तृत और नवीनतम प्रावधानों के लिए, अपीलार्थी विभागीय वेबसाइट www.cbec.gov.in को देख सकते हैं। / For the elaborate, detailed and latest provisions relating to filing of appeal to the higher appellate authority, the appellant may refer to the Departmental website www.cbec.gov.in



ORDER-IN-APPEAL

The below mentioned 10 appeals have been filed by the Appellants (hereinafter referred to as "Appellant No.1 to Appellant No. 10"), as detailed in Table below, against Order-in-Original No. 08/D/2021-22 dated 12.5.2021 (hereinafter referred to as 'impugned order') passed by the Assistant Commissioner, Central GST, Morbi-I Division, Rajkot Commissionerate (hereinafter referred to as 'adjudicating authority'):-

Sl. No.	Appeal No.	Appellants	Name & Address of the Appellant
1.	V2/324/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.1	M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642
2.	V2/325/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.2	Shri Manoj Dhanjibhai Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, Morbi.
3.	V2/326/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.3	Shri Rameshchandra Govindbhai Patel Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, Morbi.
4.	V2/327/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.4	Shri Y. R Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, Morbi.
5.	V2/328/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.5	Shri A. B Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, Morbi.
6.	V2/329/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.6	Shri Ashwin Dhanjibhai Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, Morbi.
7.	V2/330/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.7	Shri D. R Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, Morbi.
8.	V2/331/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.8	Shri Govindbhai Vashram Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, Morbi.
9.	V2/332/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.9	Shri Jayprakash Dhanjibhai Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, Morbi.
10.	V2/333/RAJ/2021	Appellant No.10	Krishnakumar Govindbhai Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, Morbi.

2. The facts of the case, in brief, are that Appellant No. 1 was engaged in manufacture of Ceramic Floor and Wall Tiles falling under Chapter Heading No. 69 of the erstwhile Central Excise Tariff Act, 1985 and was holding Central

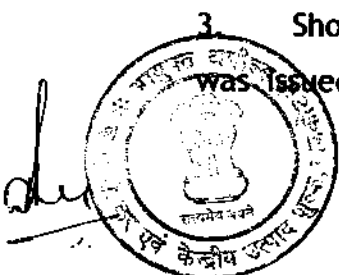


Excise Registration No. AAAFO3267DXM001. Intelligence gathered by the officers of Directorate General of Central Excise Intelligence, Zonal Unit, Ahmedabad (DGCEI) indicated that various Tile manufacturers of Morbi were indulged in malpractices in connivance with Shroffs / Brokers and thereby engaged in large scale evasion of Central Excise duty. Simultaneous searches were carried out on 22.12.2015 at the premises of Shroffs in Rajkot and Morbi and various incriminating documents were seized. On scrutiny of said documents and Statements tendered by the said Shroffs, it was revealed that huge amounts of cash were deposited from all over India into bank accounts managed by said Shroffs and such cash amounts were passed on to Tile Manufacturers through Brokers/Middlemen/Cash Handlers. Subsequently, simultaneous searches were carried out on 23.12.2015 and 31.12.2015 at the premises of Brokers/Middleman/Cash Handlers engaged by the Tile manufacturers and certain incriminating documents were seized.

2.1 Investigation carried out revealed that the Shroffs opened bank accounts in the names of their firms and passed on the bank account details to Tile manufacturers through their Brokers/Middlemen. The Tile manufacturers further passed on the bank account details to their customers/ buyers to deposit the cash in respect of the goods sold to them without bills into these accounts. After depositing the cash, the customers used to inform the Tile manufacturers, who in turn would inform the Brokers or directly to the Shroffs. Details of such cash deposit along with the copies of pay-in-slips were communicated to the manufacturers by the Customers. The Shroffs on confirming the receipt of the cash in their bank accounts, passed on the cash to the Brokers after deducting their commission from it. The Brokers further handed over the cash to the Tile manufacturers after deducting their commission. This way the sale proceeds of an illicit transaction was routed from buyers of goods to Tile manufacturers through Shroffs and Brokers.

2.2 During scrutiny of documents seized from the office premises of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot, and M/s P.C. Enterprise, Rajkot, all Shroffs and M/s Sarvodaya Shroff, Broker/ Middleman, it was revealed that the said Shroffs had received total amount of Rs. 54,05,980/- in their bank account during the period from February, 2015 to December, 2015, which was passed on to Appellant No. 1 in cash through M/s Sarvodaya Shroff, Broker/ Middleman. The said amount was alleged to be sale proceeds of goods removed clandestinely by Appellant No. 1.

3. Show Cause Notice No. DGGI/AZU/Gr-A/36-149/2019-20 dated 25.2.2020 was issued to Appellant No. 1 calling them to show cause as to why Central



Excise duty amount of Rs. 6,75,033/- should not be demanded and recovered from them under proviso to Section 11A(4) of the Central Excise Act, 1944 (*hereinafter referred to as "Act"*) along with interest under Section 11AA of the Act and also proposing imposition of penalty under Section 11AC of the Act. The Show Cause Notice also proposed imposition of penalty upon Appellant No. 2 to 10 under Rule 26(1) of the Central Excise Rules, 2002.

3.1 The above said Show Cause Notice was adjudicated vide the impugned order which confirmed Central Excise duty of Rs. 6,75,033/- under Section 11A(4) along with interest under Section 11AA of the Act and imposed penalty of Rs. 6,75,033/- under Section 11AC of the Act upon Appellant No. 1 with option of reduced penalty as envisaged under provisions of Section 11AC of the Act. The impugned order also imposed penalty of Rs. 20,000/- each upon Appellant Nos. 2 to 10 under Rule 26(1) of the Rules.

4. Being aggrieved with the impugned order, Appellants Nos. 1 to 10 have preferred appeals on various grounds, *inter alia*, as below :-

Appellant No. 1:-

- (i) The impugned order passed by the Adjudicating Authority is liable to be quashed and set aside.
- (ii) The allegation made in the impugned order about clandestine removal of goods is not true. It is a settled position of law that a serious charge of clandestine manufacture and illicit removal of excisable goods cannot be considered only on the basis of third party evidence and statement of middleman /broker or any other person. They have not committed any breach of Central Excise Act, 1944 and rules framed thereunder and therefore, proceedings initiated against them are without any justification and without authority of law.
- (iii) That it is settled position of law that the Department must adduce evidence regarding procurement of raw materials, actual production of goods in the factory, removal of goods by adducing evidence of various agencies involved in delivering goods to customers, payment made to them etc. It is a settled law that on the basis of documents like challans, books or papers containing some jottings and details, the Revenue cannot make out a case for clandestine manufacture and illicit removal of goods. Even on un-corroborative statements, charge of clandestine removal cannot be sustained.



- (iv) That in cases of clandestine removal of goods, the burden to prove that the Appellant was involved in clandestine manufacture / clearance of goods is on the Department and the Department is required to adduce sufficient evidence in order to demand duty in such cases. Merely some inculpatory statement and loose papers cannot be ground to demand duty and relied upon following case laws:
- (a) Ambica Chemicals - 2002 (148) ELT 101
 (b) K. Rajgopal - 2002 (142) ELT 128
 (c) Sangmitra Mills - 2004 (163) ELT 472
 (d) Arya Fibres - 2014 (311) ELT 529
 (e) Belgium Glass & Ceramics Pvt Ltd - 2017 (356) ELT 146
- (v) That entire case of the Department is based upon third party evidences. There is no direct evidence to show clandestine removal of goods. Nothing was found at their premises, which would show that they were engaged in illicit activity. Therefore, in compliance with the principles of natural justice, the opportunity of cross examination of the person whose statement was relied upon against them should be given in adjudication proceedings. However, the adjudicating authority has denied cross examination of persons who had given the statements. Thus, the adjudicating authority has not followed this cardinal principle of natural justice. The action of the adjudicating authority has vitiated the Show Cause Notice and thus, the impugned order is required to be dropped. The Appellant relied upon following case laws:
- (a) Andaman Timer Industries - 2015 (324) ELT 641
 (b) Kurle Pan Products Pvt Ltd - 2014 (307) ELT 42
- (vi) The demand issued by invoking extended period of limitation under Section 11A(1) of the Central Excise Act, 1944 is unauthorized. The law about invocation of extended period of limitation is well settled. Only in a case, where the assessee knew that certain information was required to be disclosed but the assessee deliberately did not disclose such information, then the case would be that of suppression of facts. Even in cases, where certain information was not disclosed as the assessee was under a bonafide impression that it was not duty bound to disclose such information, it would not be a case of suppression of facts as held by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of Padmini Products and Chemphar Drugs -1989 (43) ELT 195.

As demand itself is wrongly confirmed in the impugned order, the demand of interest as well as imposition of penalty is equally wrong,



illegal and incorrect. When the demand itself is not sustainable, no interest would be payable and no penalty could be imposed under Section 11AC of the Act. Thus, the impugned order deserves to be quashed and set aside.

Appellant Nos. 2 to 10:-

(i) The entire case is mainly against the company and appellant is made a co-noticee only because he is one of the partners of the company. The company has already filed an appeal challenging the impugned order itself. If the appeal of the company is allowed, automatically present appeal of the appellant would also be allowed. All the submissions made by the company in its appeal are equally important for the purpose of this appeal. Therefore, instead of repeating all those submissions herein and burdening this reply, appellant request to kindly consider all the submissions made by the company in their appeal.

(ii) That no penalty could have been imposed on him as there are no specific allegations of personal gain by the appellant and there is no evidence of appellant's personal involvement in the alleged evasion of duty by the company and relied upon Order No. A/1624 to 1626/WZB/AHD dated 14.02.2017 of the Hon'ble CESTAT, Ahmedabad passed in the case of Gujarat Borosil Ltd V/s. CCE, Surat-II.

(iii) That it is a settled law that before imposing penalty under Rule 26, it requires to be proved that he was dealing with the goods with the knowledge that they are liable for confiscation. As there is no such evidence against him, no penalty could have been even otherwise imposed on him and relied upon following case laws:

- a. A.K. Tantia reported at 2003 (158) ELT 638
- b. ITC Ltd reported at 1998 (104) ELT 151
- c. Shri Anil Bhalla reported at 2001 (138) ELT 883.

5. Personal Hearing in the matter was held in virtual mode through video conferencing on 8.6.2022. Shri Chetan Dethariya, Chartered Accountant, appeared on behalf of all the Appellants. He reiterated the submissions made in appeal memorandum as well as in additional written submission dated 7.6.2022. He stated that no statement was recorded in their case. Further, the cash transactions through Shroff can be for any purpose and not necessarily for clandestine removal of goods.



additional written submission dated 7.6.2022, it has been contended

(i) The adjudicating authority has committed the error in confirming the duty considering the total cash proceed found in diaries, registers recovered from Shroff's/broker's premises at the time of inquiry, as transaction value under Section 4 of the Act. Central Excise law does not permit the revenue to straightaway demand the duty on transaction value in such cases where Section 4A would be applicable and excise duty under Section 4A of the Act is levied and collected on the RSP/MRP. Therefore authority had no jurisdiction to confirm the duty against the Noticee, even if it was assumed that cash payments were received by the Noticee.

(ii) That the Department has not determined the price of the goods namely tiles, which are alleged to have been cleared without payment of duty in accordance with the Central Excise (Determination of Retail Sale Price of Excisable Goods) Rules, 2008. That the Department was bound to apply the formula as stipulated under Rule 4 in order to determine the value Rs. 54,05,980/- of tiles and any value determined without application of these Rules is without jurisdiction.

(iii) That Notification No. 49/2008-CX., (N.T.) dated 24.12.2008 vide Sr. No. 58 stipulates that an abatement of 45% has to be given on the value of tiles and duty is to be calculated after giving such abatement. In the present case the department had to calculate abatement on the appropriate value of tiles and not on the assumed value. The value was to be determined in accordance with proper rules. Therefore, the quantification of duty of Rs.12,29,569/- on the value of the goods without calculating the value as per Rules and not giving abatement on such appropriate value is illegal and unjustified.

6. I have carefully gone through the facts of the case, the impugned order, the appeal memoranda and written as well as oral submissions made by the Appellants. The issue to be decided is whether the impugned order, in the facts of this case, confirming demand on Appellant No. 1 and imposing penalty on Appellants Nos. 1 to 10 is correct, legal and proper or not.

7. On perusal of records, I find that an offence case was booked by the officers of Directorate General of Central Excise Intelligence, Ahmedabad against Appellant No. 1 for clandestine removal of goods. Simultaneous searches carried out at the premises of Shroffs / Brokers / Middlemen situated in Rajkot and Morbi resulted in recovery of various incriminating documents indicating



the DGCEI, it was alleged that various Tile manufacturers of Morbi were indulged in malpractices in connivance with Shroffs / Brokers and thereby engaged in large scale evasion of Central Excise duty. During investigation, it was revealed by the investigating officers that the Tile manufacturers sold goods without payment of duty and collected sale proceeds from their buyers in cash through said Shroff/Brokers/ middlemen. As per the *modus operandi* unearthed by the DGCEI, it was alleged that the Tile manufacturers passed on the bank account details of the Shroffs to their buyers with instructions to deposit the cash in respect of the goods sold to them without bills into these accounts. After depositing the cash, the buyers used to inform the Tile manufacturers, who in turn would inform the Brokers or directly to the Shroffs. Details of such cash deposit along with the copies of pay-in-slips were communicated to the Tile manufacturers by the Customers. The Shroffs on confirming the receipt of the cash in their bank accounts, passed on the cash to the Brokers after deducting their commission from it. The Brokers further handed over the cash to the Tile manufacturers after deducting their commission. This way the sale proceeds was routed through Shroffs/Brokers/ middlemen.

8. I find from the case records that the DGCEI had covered 4 Shroffs and 4 brokers/middleman during investigation, which revealed that 186 manufacturers were routing sale proceeds of illicit transactions from the said Shroffs/Brokers/Middlemen. I find that the DGCEI has, *inter alia*, relied upon evidences collected from the premises of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot and M/s P.C. Enterprise, Rajkot, all Shroffs and M/s Sarvodaya Shroff, Morbi, Broker / Middleman to allege clandestine removal of goods by the Appellant herein. It is settled position of law that in the case involving clandestine removal of goods, initial burden of proof is on the Department to prove the charges. Hence, it would be pertinent to examine the said evidences gathered by the DGCEI and relied upon by the adjudicating authority in the impugned order to confirm the demand of Central Excise duty.

8.1. I find that during search carried out at the office premises of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot and Shroffs, on 22.12.2015, certain private records were seized. The said private records contained bank statements of various bank accounts operated by M/s K.N. Brothers, sample of which is reproduced in the Show Cause Notice. I find that the said bank statements contained details like particulars, deposit amount, initiating branch code etc. Further, it was mentioned in handwritten form the name of city from where the amount was deposited and code name of concerned Middleman/Broker to whom they had handed over the said cash amount.



8.2. I have gone through the Statement of Shri Lalit Ashumal Gangwani, Owner of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot, / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot recorded on 23.12.2015 under Section 14 of the Act. In the said statement, Shri Lalit Ashumal Gangwani, *inter alia*, deposed that,

“Q.5 Please give details about your work in M/s Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot and M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot.

A.5. ... We have opened the above mentioned 9 bank accounts and give the details of these accounts to the Middleman located in Morbi. These middle men are working on behalf of Tile Manufacturers located in Morbi. These Middleman then gives our Bank details to the Tiles Manufacturers of Morbi who in turn further passes these details to their Tiles dealers located all over India. The Tiles dealers then deposit cash in these accounts as per the instruction of the ceramic Tiles Manufacturers who in turn inform the Middleman. The Middleman then inform us about the cash deposited and the name of the city from where the amount has been deposited. We check all our bank accounts through online banking system on the computer installed in our office and take out the printout of the cash amount deposited during the entire day in all the accounts and mark the details on the printouts. On the same day, latest by 15:30 hours, we do RTGS to either M/s Siddhanath Agency and or to M/s Radheyshyam Enterprises in Sakar Complex, Soni Bazar, Rajkot. In lieu of the RTGS, M/s Siddhanath Agency and or to M/s Radheyshyam Agency gives the cash amount. The said cash is then distributed to concern Middleman.

Q.6: Please give details of persons who had deposited the amount in your firms.

A.6. We are not aware of any persons who had deposited the cash amount in our bank accounts, the ceramic Tile Manufacturers direct the said parties to deposit the amount in cash in these accounts. As already stated above, we had given our bank accounts details to the middle man who had in turn given these numbers to the Tile Manufacturers.”

8.3 I have gone through the Statement of Shri Nitinbhai Arjanbhai Chikani, actual owner of M/s PC Enterprise, Rajkot, recorded on 24.12.2015 under Section 14 of the Act. In the said statement, Shri Nitinbhai Arjanbhai Chikani, *inter alia*, deposed that,

Please give the details about your work in M/s Maruti Enterprise, Plot



no. 33, Udaynagar street-1, Mavdi main Road, Rajkot, M/s India Enterprise, Plot No. 33, Udaynagar street-1, Mavdi main road, Rajkot and M/s PC Enterprise, Office No. 110, Haridarshan Arcade, 150 Ft. Ring Road, Rajkot.

A.5 Though, I am not the owner of the above mentioned firms but I looked after all the work of M/s Maruti Enterprises (now closed), M/s India enterprise and M/s PC enterprise with the help of staff. Basically, our work is to receive the cash amount in our 9 bank accounts of the aforesaid firms.

These Bank accounts were opened during the period from March 2015 to June 2015. All the bank accounts of M/s Maruti Enterprise were closed on December 2015 except one account of Bank of India.

We have opened the above mentioned 9 bank accounts and gave the details of these accounts to the middleman located in Morbi. The middleman are working on behalf of tile manufacturers located in Morbi. These middleman then gives our bank details to the tiles manufacturer of Morbi who in turn further passes these details to their tiles dealers located all over India.

The tile dealers then deposits cash in these accounts as per the instructions of the ceramic tile manufacturers who in turn inform the middleman. The middle man then inform us about the cash deposited and the name of the city from where the amount has been deposited. We check all our bank accounts through 'online banking' systems on the computer installed in our office and take out the printout of the cash amount deposited during the entire day in all the accounts and mark the details on the printouts. On the same day latest by 15:30 hrs, we do RTGS to M/s Siddhanth Agency in lieu of the RTGS, M/s Siddhanath Agency gives the cash amount. The said cash is then distributed to concern middleman.

Q.6 Please give the details of persons who had deposited the amount in your firms namely M/s Maruti Enterprise, M/s India Enterprise and M/s PC Enterprise ?

A.6 We are not aware of any persons who had deposited the cash amount in our bank accounts. The ceramic tile manufacturers direct the said parties to deposit the amount in cash in these accounts, As already stated above, we had given our bank account details to the middle man who had in turn given these numbers to the tile manufacturers."

8.4 I have gone through the Statement of Shri Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya, Accountant-Cum-Cashier of M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff, Morbi, recorded on 24.12.2015 under Section 14 of the Act. In the said statement, Shri Sandipbha Bachubhai Sanariya, *inter alia*, deposed that,

"Q.2 Please state about business or service activities and working pattern of your firm, M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff?"

A.2 I am working as an Account-Cum Cashier in M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff, having office at 1st floor, Above Shree Ram Farsan, Chandramuli Complex, Ravapar Road, BapaSitaram Chowk, Morbi since five years. Shri Shaileshbhai Odhavjibhai Marvaniya, is the owner of M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff who is residing at "Keshav", Darpan-3, Ravapar Road, Morbi. Shri Shaileshbhai Odhavjibhai Marvaniya, is also one of the partner of M/s. Sun World Vitrified, Ghuntu Road, Rajkot, a tiles manufacturer, having share of 20%. I state that M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff is doing the business of commission agent for disbursing the cash deposited by the customers of various Tile manufacturers, Traders &



Showroom located at Rajkot, throughout India, since last seven years. We are charging commission Rs.50/- to Rs.100/- per lakh from our client and varies from client to client. Our main Shroffs are M/s. Maruti Enterprises, M/s. JP Enterprise, M/s. India Enterprise & M/s. PC Enterprise, all belonged to Shri Nitinbhai of Rajkot and M/s. Ambaji Enterprise, 101 1st Floor, Sathguru Arcade, Dhebar Road, One Way, Rajkot (now closed) and M/s. K. N. Brothers, Office No. 505, 5th Floor Unicorn Centre, Near Panchnath Mandir, Main Road, Rajkot.

The procedure is that initially we take the bank account details from our main Shroff and convey the same to the tile manufacturers and also to Tiles showroom owners. These manufacturers and Tiles showroom owners in turn forward the said details to their customers located all over India, who wish to deposit cash against sale of tiles by them. The customers, as per instructions of these manufacturers and showroom owners, deposit cash in these accounts and inform them about the deposits made by them. These manufacturers and showroom owners in turn inform us about the details of the account in which the amount has been deposited and also the amount and the city from where the amount has been deposited. We then inform the concerned Shroff, in whose account the cash amount to us in Morbi at our office and we after deducting our commission, hand over the cash to the concerned Ceramic Tiles manufacturers and Ceramic Tiles Showroom owners. I further state Shri Shaileshbhai Odhavjibhai Marvaniya used to come to our office in morning to give cash & detail statements of the parties to whom cash is to be delivered and in the evening I used to hand over day to day details of all transactions Cash Balance, Cash acknowledgement slips, Cash Book statement to Shri Shaileshbhai Ordhavjibhai Marvaniya.

Q.3. Please produce the documents / details relating to the transactions made with Shroffs and clients, Cash acknowledgement slips showing handing over cash to respective client, Cash Book Statements, Commission for the last five years of your firm M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff?

A.3. As I have been asked to produce above documents, I immediately contacted my owner Shri Shaileshbhai to hand over the documents /details as asked for submission. In turn Shri Shaileshbhai asked his nephew, Shri Chirag Rameshbhai Marvaniya, to deliver some documents to me which I produce today as detailed below.

- (i) A file containing copy of statements showing detail of cash deposits in respective bank accounts, throughout India, for the period from 03.12.2015 to 19.12.2015, Rajkot office Rojmel for December 2015 Cash Acknowledgement Slip, containing pages from 1 to 799.
- (ii) A file containing Cash Acknowledgement Slip, containing pages from 1 to 849.
- (iii) A file containing Cash Acknowledgement Slip, containing pages from 1 to 701.

I further state, we maintain a diary wherein entries of all transactions relating to receipts of cash from Shroffs and disbursement of the same to the respective clients with commission deducted are being shown by us. Shri Shaileshbhai keeps the diary in his own custody and every morning he gives us the same along with cash balance for making daily entries and we hand over back the diary to Shri Shaileshbhai at the end of each day. Therefore, I am not in a position to produce the same. However, I assure that I will inform my owner Shri Shaileshbhai to produce the same



I further state that in Cash Acknowledgement slip as per the direction of Shri Shaileshbhai, we used to mention the cash amount delivered in thousands viz. Rs.99,000/- would be written as "99". In the cash acknowledgement slip we used to write the name of the person along with his mobile number to whom cash delivered and on the back side we write the code name of the client representing the tiles factories / showrooms with details of amounts deposited in bank accounts at each center. The figures are also mentioned in the same pattern i.e. in thousand on each slip.

I further state that I don't know the place where Shri Shaileshbhai Odhavjibhai Marvaniya keeps details of all transactions, Cash, Cash Acknowledgement slips, Cash Book Statements etc. on everyday and where all these documents of the past period are lying. Only Shri Shaileshbhai knows about the whereabouts of the documents of the past period.

....

Q.8 I am showing you the statement dated 22.12.2015 of Shri Solanki J Mohanlal S/o Shri Mohan Lal Solanki, Proprietor of M/s. K.N. Brothers, Office No. 505, 5th Floor, Unicorn Centre Near Panchnath Mandir, Main Road, Rajkot and statement dated 24.12.2015 of Shri Nitinbha Arjanbhai Chikani, S/o Shri Arjanbhai Jadavjibhai Chikani, Block No. 403 Vasant Vihar Patidar Chowk Sadhu Vasvani Road, Rajkot. Please go through it and officer your comments.

A.8 I have gone through the statement dated 22.12.2015 of Shri Solanki JS Mohanlal S/O Shri Mohan Lal Solanki, Proprietor of M/s. K. N. Brothers, Office No. 505, 5th Floor, Unicorn Centre, Near Panchnath Mandir, Main Road, Rajkot and statement dated 24.12.2015 of Shri Nitinbhai Arjanbhai Chikani S/o Shri Arjanbhai Jadavjibhai Chikani, Block No. 403, Vasant Vihar Patidar Chowk, Sadhu Vasvani Road, Rajkot and put my dated signature in token of the correctness of the facts mentioned therein and I am in full agreement of the same.

Q. 9 Please provide the details of bank accounts of main Shroffs wherein the customers of your clients deposit cash on day to day basis.

A.9. I state that Bank Account number 7933005900000048 of Punjab National Bank, Kuvadava Branch, Rajkot of our Shroff namely M/s. KN brothers; Bank Account Number 3766002100027112 to Punjab National Bank, Kalavad Road, Rajkot of our Shroff M/s. P. C. Enterprise are the accounts dedicated to our firms, wherein we instruct the clients to deposit cash by their customers on day to day basis from different locations meant to be delivered to the tiles manufacturer/show rooms of the manufactures"

8.4.1 I have also gone through the further Statement of Shri Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya, Accountant-Cum-Cashier of M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff, Morbi, recorded on 02.01.2016 under Section 14 of the Act. In the said statement, Shri Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya, *inter alia*, deposed that,

"Q.2. During recording your Statement dated 24.12.15, you stated that you maintain a diary for recording all transactions relating to receipts of cash from Shroffs and disbursement of the same to the respective clients. You had further stated that you would inform your owner Shri Shaileshbhai to produce the same. Please produce the same.

In this regards, I state that I had informed to Shri Shaileshbhai on the



same day to handover the diary and other related records to DGCEI Office, Ahmedabad immediately. Sir, I do not know the reason why he has yet not produced the said records to your office till date.

Q.3. Please produce the documents / details relating to the transactions made with Shroffs and clients, cash acknowledgement slips showing handling over cash to respective clients, Cash book statements, commission etc. for the last five years of your firm M/a. Sarvoday Shroff.

A.3. Sir, in my statement dated 24.12.15, I have already stated that the documents / details relating to the transactions made with Shroffs and clients, Cash Acknowledgement slips showing handling over cash to respective clients, Cash book statements, commission etc. in respect of my firm M/S. Sarvoday Shroff have been kept by Shri Shaileshbhai, Owner of the firm. Further, I have already produced records which I received from Shri Chirag, nephew of Shri Shaileshbhai on 24.12.15 to your office during recording my statement. I do not have any records of the firm with me and therefore I am not in a position to produce the same.

Q.4. please peruse following files produced by you during recording your statement dated 24.12.15

(i) A file containing copy of a statements showing details of cash deposits in respective bank accounts, throughout India, for the period from 03.12.2015 to 19.12.2015, Rajkot office Rojmel for December'2015, Cash Acknowledgement Slip, containing pages from 1 to 799;

(ii) A file containing Cash Acknowledgement Slip, containing pages from 1 to 849;

(iii) A file containing Cash Acknowledgement Slip, containing pages from 1 to 701.

Please explain who has prepared these records.

A.4. Today, I have perused following files which I had produced during recording my statement dated 24.12.15. I state that I have prepared all cash acknowledgement slips which are available in the all three files. I have prepared these slips to record the name and details of the persons who collect cash from us, cash amount, place from where the same was deposited etc. As regards, statements showing details of cash deposits in respective bank accounts as available in File No. 1 at P. No. 31 to 55, I state that the same were prepared by M/S. K.N. Brothers and handed over to us for our record. Further, statements showing details of cash deposits in respective bank accounts as available in File No. 1 at P. No. 01 to 29, I state that the same were prepared by Shri Nitin of M/S. P.C. Enterprise and handed over to us for our record.

Q.5. Please explain and de-code entries as recorded by you in all cash acknowledgement slips produced by you

A.5. Today, I have gone through the records as produced by me. Sir, please provide me blank worksheet containing columns like S. no., Record No., Page No., date, name of the person of the manufacturer who collects the cash, name of the Ceramic Tiles manufacturer at Morbi, Actual cash handed over, City from where the was deposited, Remarks etc Please provide me sufficient amount of blank seats with basic data of first three columns. I will sit here and verify acknowledgement slips and fill up the de-coded factual data in the said blank worksheets in my own handwriting.

Q.6. Today, as requested, you are provided following three worksheets having first three columns duly filled up. Please peruse each acknowledgement slip and fill up the de-coded data in respective column and returned all seats duly signed by you.



A.6. Today, I have gone through each cash acknowledgement slips as produced by me. After going through and verification, I have filled up all the details like date, name of the person of the manufacturer who collects the cash, name of the Ceramic Tiles manufacturer at Morbi, Actual cash handed over, City from where the cash was deposited, remarks etc. in my own handwriting and as per my understanding. I hereby submit following worksheets correctly filled up and signed by me.

For File A-I- Worksheet pages from 01 to 27

For File A-I- Worksheet pages from 01 to 31 and

For File A-I- Worksheet pages from 01 to 26

9. On analyzing the documentary evidences collected during search at the office premises of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot and M/s PC Enterprise, Rajkot, all Shroffs and M/s Sarvodaya Shroff, Morbi, broker/ middleman, as well as deposition made by Shri Lalit Ashumal Gangwani, owner of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot, Shri Nitinbhai Arjanbhai Chikani, owner of M/s PC Enterprise, Rajkot and Shri Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya of M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff in their respective Statements recorded under Section 14 of the Act, I find that customers of Appellant No. 1 had deposited cash amount in bank accounts of Shroff M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot and M/s PC Enterprise, Rajkot which was converted into cash by them and handed over to M/s Sarvodaya Shroff, Broker/Middleman, who handed over the said cash amount to Appellant No. 1.

9.1 On examining the Statements of Shri Lalit Ashumal Gangwani, owner of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot, Shri Nitinbhai Arjanbhai Chikani of M/s P.C. Enterprise, Rajkot and Shri Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya of M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff, it is apparent that the said Statements contained plethora of the facts, which are in the knowledge of the deponents only. For example, Shri Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya deciphered the meaning of each and every entry written in the private records seized from his premises. He also gave details of when and how much cash was delivered to which Tile manufacturer and even concerned person who had received cash amount. It is not the case that the said Statements were recorded under duress or threat. Further, said Statements of Shri Lalit Ashumal Gangwani, Shri Nitinbhai Arjanbhai Chikani and Shri Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya have not been retracted. So, veracity of deposition made in said Statements is not under dispute.

9.2 I find that the Appellant No. 1 had devised such a *modus operandi* that it was almost impossible to identify buyers of goods or transporters who transported the goods. The Appellant No. 1 used to inform M/s K.N. Brothers, Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot, M/s PC Enterprise, Shroffs, or Shri



Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya, Morbi, Middleman, about deposit of cash in bank accounts of Shroffs on receipt of communication from their buyers and such cash amount would reach to them through middleman/broker. When cash amount was deposited by buyers of goods in bank accounts of Shroffs, the same was not reflected in bank statements, as emerging from the records. So, there was no details of buyers available who had deposited cash amount in bank accounts of Shroff. This way the Appellant No. 1 was able to hide the identity of buyers of illicitly removed goods. It is a basic common sense that no person will maintain authentic records of the illegal activities or manufacture being done by it. It is also not possible to unearth all evidences involved in the case. The adjudicating authority is required to examine the evidences on record and decide the case. The Hon'ble High Court in the case of International Cylinders Pvt Ltd reported at 2010(255) ELT68(H.P.) has held that once the Department proves that something illegal had been done by the manufacturer which *prima facie* shows that illegal activities were being carried, the burden would shift to the manufacturer.

9.3 It is also pertinent to mention that the adjudicating authority was not conducting a trial of a criminal case, but was adjudicating a Show Cause Notice as to whether there has been clandestine removal of excisable goods without payment of excise duty. In such cases, preponderance of probabilities would be sufficient and case is not required to be proved beyond reasonable doubt. I rely on the Order passed by the Hon'ble CESTAT, Bangalore passed in the case of Ramachandra Rexins Pvt. Ltd. reported as 2013 (295) E.L.T. 116 (Tri. - Bang.), wherein it has been held that,

“7.2 In a case of clandestine activity involving suppression of production and clandestine removal, it is not expected that such evasion has to be established by the Department in a mathematical precision. After all, a person indulging in clandestine activity takes sufficient precaution to hide/destroy the evidence. The evidence available shall be those left in spite of the best care taken by the persons involved in such clandestine activity. In such a situation, the entire facts and circumstances of the case have to be looked into and a decision has to be arrived at on the yardstick of ‘preponderance of probability’ and not on the yardstick of ‘beyond reasonable doubt’, as the decision is being rendered in quasi-judicial proceedings.”

9.4 I also rely on the Order passed by the Hon'ble Tribunal in the case of A.N. Guha & Co. reported in 1996 (86) E.L.T. 333(Tri.), wherein it has been held that,

“In all such cases of clandestine removal, it is not possible for the Department to prove the same with mathematical precision. The Department is deemed to



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have discharged their burden if they place so much of evidence which, prima facie, shows that there was a clandestine removal if such evidence is produced by the Department. Then the onus shifts on to the Appellants to prove that there was no clandestine removal”.

10. After careful examination of evidences available on record in the form of documentary evidences as well as oral evidence, I am of the considered opinion that the Department has discharged initial burden of proof for alleging clandestine removal of goods and the burden of proof shifts to the assessee to establish by independent evidence that there was no clandestine removal and the assessee cannot escape from the rigour of law by picking loopholes in the evidences placed by the Department. I rely on the decision rendered by the Hon'ble Madras High Court in the case of Lawn Textile Mills Pvt. Ltd. reported as 2018 (362) E.L.T. 559 (Mad.), wherein it has been held that,

“30. The above facts will clearly show that the allegation is one of clandestine removal. It may be true that the burden of proving such an allegation is on the Department. However, clandestine removal with an intention to evade payment of duty is always done in a secret manner and not as an open transaction for the Department to immediately detect the same. Therefore, in case of clandestine removal, where secrecies involved, there may be cases where direct documentary evidence will not be available. However, based on the seized records, if the Department is able to *prima facie* establish the case of clandestine removal and the assessee is not able to give any plausible explanation for the same, then the allegation of clandestine removal has to be held to be proved. In other words, the standard and degree of proof, which is required in such cases, may not be the same, as in other cases where there is no allegation of clandestine removal.”

11. The Appellant has contended that entire case of the Department is based upon third party evidences and there is no direct evidence to show clandestine removal of goods. Therefore, in compliance with the principles of natural justice, the opportunity of cross examination of the person whose statement was relied upon against them should be given in adjudication proceedings. However, the adjudicating authority has denied cross examination of persons who had given the statements. Thus, the adjudicating authority has not followed this cardinal principle of natural justice. The action of the adjudicating authority has vitiated the Show Cause Notice and thus, the impugned order is required to be dropped.



In this regard, it is observed from Para 12 of the impugned order that the

Appellant had not filed reply to Show Cause Notice. Further, personal hearing was scheduled on 21.1.2021, 3.2.2021, 1.3.2021 and 11.3.2021 but the Appellants failed to appear before the adjudicating authority. So, the contention of the Appellant that adjudicating authority denied cross examination of witnesses, is factually incorrect.

11.2 Apart from above, I find that none of the Statements of Shroff/ Middleman/Broker recorded during investigation have been retracted nor there any allegation of duress or threat during recording of Statements. Further, Shroff/Middleman/broker have no reason to depose before the investigating officers something which is contrary to facts. It is also pertinent to mention that the present case was not one off case involving clandestine removal of goods by Tile manufacturers of Morbi. It is on record that DGCEI had simultaneously booked offence cases against 186 such manufacturers for evasion of Central Excise duty who had adopted similar *modus operandi* by routing sale proceeds of illicitly cleared finished goods through Shroffs / Middleman/brokers. It is also on records that out of said 186 manufacturers, 61 had admitted and had also paid duty evaded by them. So, the documentary evidences gathered by the investigating officers from the premises of Shroffs / middleman contained trails of illicitly removed goods and preponderance of probability is certainly against Appellant No. 1. It has been consistently held by the higher appellate fora that cross examination is not mandatory and it depends on facts of each and every case. I rely on the decision rendered by the Hon'ble Bombay High Court in the case of Patel Engineering Ltd reported as 2014 (307) E.L.T. 862 (Bom.), wherein it has been held that,

“23. Therefore, we are of the opinion that it will not be correct to hold that irrespective of the facts and circumstances and in all inquiries, the right of cross examination can be asserted. Further, as held above which rule or principle of natural justice must be applied and followed depends upon several factors and as enumerated above. Even if there is denial of the request to cross examine the witnesses in an inquiry, without anything more, by such denial alone, it will not be enough to conclude that principles of natural justice have been violated. Therefore, the judgments relied upon by Shri Kantawala must be seen in the factual backdrop and peculiar circumstances of the assessee's ease before this Court.”

12. Appellant No. 1 has contended that in cases of clandestine removal of goods, the burden to prove that the Appellant was involved in clandestine manufacture / clearance of goods is on the Department and the Department is required to adduce sufficient evidence in order to demand duty in such cases. It



is further contended that the Department must adduce evidence regarding procurement of raw materials, actual production of goods in the factory, removal of goods by adducing evidence of various agencies involved in delivering goods to customers, payment made to them etc. to allege clandestine removal of goods, without which the charge of clandestine removal cannot sustain.

12.1 I find that the investigating officers gathered evidences from the premises of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot, M/s PC Enterprise, Rajkot, Shroffs, or M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff, Morbi, Middleman, which indicted that Appellant No. 1 routed sales proceeds of illicitly removed goods through the said Shroffs and Middleman/Broker. The said evidences were corroborated by the depositions made by Shri Lalit Ashumal Gangwani, owner of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot, Shri Nitinbhai Arjanbhai Chikani, owner of M/s PC Enterprise, Rajkot and Shri Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya of M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff, Morbi during the course of adjudication. As discussed supra, Appellant No. 1 had devised such a *modus operandi* that it was almost impossible to identify buyers of goods or transporters who transported the goods. In catena of decisions, it has been held that in cases of clandestine removal, it is not possible to unearth all the evidences and Department is not required to prove the case with mathematical precision. I rely on the Order passed by the Hon'ble CESTAT, Ahmedabad in the case of Apurva Aluminium Corporation reported at 1996 (261) E.L.T. 515(Tri. Ahmd.), wherein at Para 5.1 of the order, the Tribunal has held that,

“Once again the onus of proving that they have accounted for all the goods produced, shifts to the appellants and they have failed to discharge this burden. They want the department to show challanwise details of goods transported or not transported. There are several decisions of Hon'ble Supreme Court and High Courts wherein it has been held that in such clandestine activities, only the person who indulges in such activities knows all the details and it would not be possible for any investigating officer to unearth all the evidences required and prove with mathematical precision, the evasion or the other illegal activities”.

13. Appellant No. 1 has contended that no statement was recorded in their case. In this regard, it is observed from Para 3 of Show Cause Notice that summons were issued to them on 14.9.2016, 2.2.2018 and 7.1.2019 to produce various documents and to give oral evidence but they failed to appear before the investigating officers. Thus, opportunities were given to the Appellant to explain their position. However, they chose not to avail the opportunity. I, therefore, discard the contention raised by Appellant No. 1 as devoid of merit.



14. Appellant No. 1 has contended that the cash transactions through Shroff can be for any purpose and not necessarily for clandestine removal of goods. In this regard, it is observed that Shroffs Shri Lalit Ashumal Gangwani, owner of M/s K.N. Brothers, Rajkot / Shree Ambaji Enterprise, Rajkot and Shri Nitinbhai Arjanbhai Chikani, owner of M/s PC Enterprise, Rajkot in their respective statements deposed that they had given details of their bank accounts to tile manufacturers of Morbi through middlemen and the said manufacturers had passed on bank account details to their tiles dealers located all over India. They further deposed that the said tile dealers deposited cash in their bank accounts as per the instructions of tile manufacturers, which was withdrawn by them and handed over to respective tile manufacturers through middlemen. Similarly, Shri Sandipbhai Bachubhai Sanariya of M/s. Sarvodaya Shroff, broker / middleman also admitted that cash was collected from the Shroffs which was deposited by the customers of tile manufacturers and handed over to respective tile manufacturers. It is also pertinent to mention that the DGCEI had simultaneously booked offence cases against 186 such manufacturers for evasion of Central Excise duty who had adopted similar *modus operandi* by routing sale proceeds of illicitly cleared finished goods through Shroffs / Middleman/brokers and out of said 186 manufacturers, 61 had admitted and had also paid duty evaded by them. So, the documentary evidences gathered by the investigating officers from the premises of Shroffs / middleman contained trails of illicitly removed goods. Further, Appellant No. 1 has failed to explain the purpose /source of such huge amount of cash, which was received from Shroffs through M/s Sarvodaya Shroff, Morbi and whether the said cash amount was accounted for in their books of account or otherwise. Considering evidences available on record, it is apparent that the cash amount received by Appellant No. 1 from said Shroffs pertained to clandestine removal of goods. I, therefore, discard the contention of Appellant No. 1 as not sustainable.

15. In view of above, the various contentions raised by Appellant No. 1 are of no help to them and they have failed to discharge the burden cast on them that they had not indulged in clandestine removal of goods. On the other hand, the Department has adduced sufficient oral and documentary corroborative evidences to demonstrate that Appellant No.1 indulged in clandestine removal of goods and evaded payment of Central Excise duty. I, therefore, hold that confirmation of demand of Central Excise duty amount of Rs. 6,75,033/- by the adjudicating authority is correct, legal and proper. Since demand is confirmed, it is natural consequence that the confirmed demand is required to be paid along with interest at applicable rate under Section 11AA of the Act. I,



therefore, uphold order to pay interest on confirmed demand.

16. Appellant No. 1 has contended that the adjudicating authority erred in confirming the duty considering the total cash proceed found in diaries, registers recovered from Shroff's/broker's premises at the time of inquiry, as transaction value under Section 4 of the Act ignoring that Section 4A would be applicable in the present case and Central Excise duty under Section 4A of the Act is levied and collected on the RSP/MRP. Appellant No. 1 further contended that the Department has not determined the price of the goods namely tiles, in accordance with Rule 4 of the Central Excise (Determination of Retail Sale Price of Excisable Goods) Rules, 2008. As per Notification No. 49/2008-CX., (N.T.) dated 24.12.2008 vide Sr. No. 58 stipulates that an abatement of 45% has to be given on the value of tiles and duty is to be calculated after giving such abatement. Therefore, the quantification of duty of Rs. 6,75,033/- on the value of the goods without calculating the value as per Rules and not giving abatement on such appropriate value is illegal and unjustified.

16.1 I find it is pertinent to examine the provisions contained in Section 4A of the Act, which are reproduced as under:

“Section 4A. Valuation of excisable goods with reference to retail sale price.-

(1) The Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify any goods, in relation to which it is required, under the provisions of the [Legal Metrology Act, 2009 (1 of 2010)] or the rules made thereunder or under any other law for the time being in force, to declare on the package thereof the retail sale price of such goods, to which the provisions of sub-section (2) shall apply.

(2) Where the goods specified under sub-section (1) are excisable goods and are chargeable to duty of excise with reference to value, then, notwithstanding anything contained in section 4, such value shall be deemed to be the retail sale price declared on such goods less such amount of abatement, if any, from such retail sale price as the Central Government may allow by notification in the Official Gazette.”

16.2 I find that in terms of the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, retail sale price is required to be declared on packages when sold to retail customers. This would mean that when goods are sold to customers, other than retail customers, like institutional customers, the provisions of Legal Metrology Act, 2009 would not be



16.3 On examining the present case in backdrop of above provisions, I find that Appellant No. 1 has not produced any evidences that the goods were sold to retail customers. Further, as discussed above, Appellant No.1 had adopted such a modus operandi that identity of buyers could not be ascertained during investigation. Since, applicability of provisions contained in Legal Metrology Act, 2009 itself is not confirmed, it is not possible to extend benefit of abatement under Section 4A of the Act. Even if it is presumed that all the goods sold by Appellant No.1 were to retail customers then also what was realised through Shroff/Middlemen cannot be considered as MRP value for the reason that in cases when goods are sold through dealers, realised value would be less than MRP value since dealer price is always less than MRP price.

16.4 As regards contention of Appellant No.1 that duty is to be determined as per Rule 4 of the Central Excise (Determination of Retail Sale Price of Excisable Goods) Rules, 2008, I find it is pertinent to examine the provisions of Rule 4 *ibid*, which are reproduced as under:

“RULE 4. Where a manufacturer removes the excisable goods specified under sub-section (1) of section 4A of the Act, -

- (a) without declaring the retail sale price on the packages of such goods; or
- (b) by declaring the retail sale price, which is not the retail sale price as required to be declared under the provisions of the Standards of Weights and Measures Act, 1976 (60 of 1976) or rules made thereunder or any other law for the time being in force; or
- (c) by declaring the retail sale price but obliterates the same after their removal from the place of manufacture,

then, the retail sale price of such goods shall be ascertained in the following manner, namely :-

(i) if the manufacturer has manufactured and removed identical goods, within a period of one month, before or after removal of such goods, by declaring the retail sale price, then, the said declared retail sale price shall be taken as the retail sale price of such goods :

(ii) if the retail sale price cannot be ascertained in terms of clause (i), the retail sale price of such goods shall be ascertained by conducting the enquiries in the retail market where such goods have normally been sold at or about the same time of the removal of such goods from the place of manufacture :

Provided that if more than one retail sale price is ascertained under clause (i) or clause (ii), then, the highest of the retail sale price, so ascertained, shall be taken as the retail sale price of all such goods.”

16.5 I find that in the present case, the Appellant No. 1 has not demonstrated as to how their case is covered by any of the situation as envisaged under sub clause (a), (b) or (c) of Rule 4 *ibid*. Hence, provisions of Rule 4 *ibid* is not applicable in the present case.



16.6 In view of above, plea of Appellant No. 1 to assess the goods under Section 4A of the Act cannot be accepted.

17. I find that the Appellant No. 1 was found indulging in clandestine removal of goods and routed the cash through Shroff/Middleman/Broker. The *modus operandi* adopted by Appellant No. 1 was unearthed during investigation carried out against them by DGCEI, Ahmedabad. Thus, this is a clear case of suppression of facts with intent to evade payment of duty. The adjudicating authority was justified in invoking extended period of limitation on the grounds of suppression of facts. Since extended period of limitation on the grounds of suppression of facts was correctly invoked, penalty under Section 11AC of the Act is mandatory, as has been held by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of Rajasthan Spinning & Weaving Mills reported as 2009 (238) E.L.T. 3 (S.C.), wherein it is held that when there are ingredients for invoking extended period of limitation for demand of duty, imposition of penalty under Section 11AC is mandatory. The ratio of the said judgment applies to the facts of the present case. I, therefore, uphold penalty of Rs. 6,75,033/-imposed under Section 11AC of the Act.


18. Regarding penalty imposed upon Appellant No. 2 to 10 under Rule 26 of the Rules, I find that Appellant No. 2 to 10 were Partners of Appellant No. 1 and were looking after day-to-day affairs of Appellant No.1 and were the key persons of Appellant No. 1 and were directly involved in clandestine removal of the goods manufactured by Appellant No. 1 without payment of Central Excise duty and without cover of Central Excise Invoices. They were found concerned in clandestine manufacture and removal of such goods and hence, they were knowing and had reason to believe that the said goods were liable to confiscation under the Act and the Rules. I, therefore, find that imposition of penalty of Rs. 20,000/-each upon Appellant Nos. 2 to 10 under Rule 26(1) of the Rules is correct and legal.


19. In view of above, I uphold the impugned order and reject appeals of Appellants Nos. 1 to 10.

20. अपीलकर्ताओ द्वारा दर्ज की गई अपीलो का निपटारा उपरोक्त तरीके से किया जाता है।

20. The appeals filed by the Appellants are disposed off as above.



सत्यापित,

 विपुल शाह
 अधीक्षक (अपीलेंस)


 (AKHILESH KUMAR)
 Commissioner (Appeals) 2022

By R.P.A.D.

To,	सेवामें,
1. M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujarat-363642.	मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज, 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकंसर, मोरबी, गुजरात- 363642
2. Shri Manoj Dhanjibhai Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642.	श्री अशोकभाई जादवजीभाई श्री मनोज धनजीभाई पटेल, पार्टनर, मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकनसर, मोरबी, गुजरात-363642.
3. Shri Rameshchandra Govindbhai Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642.	श्री रमेशचंद्र गोविंदभाई पटेल पार्टनर, मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकनसर, मोरबी, गुजरात-363642.
4. Shri Y. R Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642.	श्री वाई. आर पटेल, पार्टनर, मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकनसर, मोरबी, गुजरात-363642.
5. Shri A. B Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642.	श्री ए.बी. पटेल, पार्टनर, मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकनसर, मोरबी, गुजरात-363642.
6. Shri Ashwin Dhanjibhai Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642.	श्री अश्विन धनजीभाई पटेल, पार्टनर, मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकनसर, मोरबी, गुजरात-363642.
7. Shri D. R Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642.	श्री डी. आर पटेल, पार्टनर, मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकनसर, मोरबी, गुजरात-363642.
8. Shri Govindbhai Vashram Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642.	श्री गोविंदभाई वशराम पटेल, पार्टनर, मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकनसर, मोरबी, गुजरात-363642.
9. Shri Jayprakash Dhanjibhai Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642.	श्री जयप्रकाश धनजीभाई पटेल, पार्टनर, मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकनसर, मोरबी, गुजरात-363642.
10. Shri Krishnakumar Govindbhai Patel, Partner of M/s Opal Ceramic Industries, 8-A National Highway, Makansar, Morbi, Gujrat-363642.	श्री कृष्णकुमार गोविंदभाई पटेल, पार्टनर, मैसर्स ओपल सिरेमिक इंडस्ट्रीज 8-ए नेशनल हाईवे, मकनसर, मोरबी, गुजरात-363642.



प्रतिलिपि :-

- 1) मुख्य आयुक्त, वस्तु एवं सेवा कर एवं केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क, गुजरात क्षेत्र, अहमदाबाद को जानकारी हेतु।
- 2) प्रधान आयुक्त, वस्तु एवं सेवा कर एवं केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क, राजकोट आयुक्तालय, राजकोट को आवश्यक कार्यवाही हेतु।
- 3) सहायक आयुक्त, वस्तु एवं सेवा कर एवं केन्द्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क मण्डल मोरबी-1, राजकोट को आवश्यक कार्यवाही हेतु।
- 4) गार्ड फ़ाइल।

