

Jagtar Singh Vs State Of Punjab

Court: High Court Of Punjab And Haryana At Chandigarh

Date of Decision: Nov. 9, 2021

Acts Referred: Indian Penal Code, 1860 " Section 279, 304A

Hon'ble Judges: Harsimran Singh Sethi, J

Bench: Single Bench

Advocate: G.S.Chahal, H.S.Multani

Final Decision: Disposed Of

Judgement

Harnaresh Singh Gill, J

Custody certificate dated 02.11.2021, by way of affidavit of the Deputy Superintendent, Central Jail, Patiala, has been filed in the Court today. The

same is taken on record.

The petitioner was tried in case bearing FIR No.198 dated 06.12.2021, registered at Police Station Civil Lines, Patiala, under Sections 279 and 304-A

IPC. The Judicial Magistrate Ist class, Patiala, vide judgment and order dated 08.01.2016, found the petitioner guilty for the offence punishable under

Sections 279 and 304-A IPC, and sentenced him as under:

Section 279 IPC Sentence To undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of three months and to pay a fine of Rs.500/- and in default of payment of

fine, to further undergo simple imprisonment for a period of 15 days.

304-A IPC To undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of two years and to pay a fine of Rs.500/-and in default of payment of fine, to further

undergo simple imprisonment for a period of 15 days.

Aggrieved there-against, the petitioner preferred an appeal before the learned Sessions Judge, Patiala, which was dismissed vide impugned judgment

dated 30.10.2019.

Still aggrieved, the petitioner has preferred the present revision petition.

During the course of hearing, learned counsel for the petitioner does not lay any challenge to the judgments of conviction of the petitioner recorded by

the courts below and for that reason, the facts are not required to be reproduced here.

Learned counsel for the petitioner has made submissions only on the aspect of sentence on which this Court has heard him as well as the learned

State counsel.

While making submissions qua the quantum of sentence, learned counsel for the petitioner would submit that the petitioner has been facing the

agony of the trial since 2011; that he is the only bread winning member of his family, and that his conduct during the trial has been quite fair and bona

fide and he has never obstructed the course of trial and the appeal. The petitioner has already undergone the sentence of 11 months and 22 days as on

01.11.2021, including the remissions of 02 months and 02 days. Under these circumstances, the sentence imposed upon the petitioner may be reduced

to the one already undergone by him.

Additionally, it is submitted that though there is another case bearing FIR No.96/2018 registered against the petitioner for the offences under Sections

279 and 304-A IPC, at Police Station Hiranagar, Jammu and Kashmir, yet the fact remains that the said case is still pending trial, and the guilt of the

petitioner is yet to be proved in the said case.

On the other hand, learned State counsel, while opposing the submissions made by the learned counsel for the petitioner, would submit that the

sentence awarded to the petitioner is in proportion to the offence committed by him. The petitioner does not deserve any leniency.

I have heard the learned counsel for the parties. Having heard the learned counsel for the parties and after a lucid examination of the record, this

Court finds that both the courts below have rightly convicted and sentenced the petitioner under Sections 279 and 304-A IPC. There is no manifest

error in the concurrent findings recorded by the courts below.

Thus, in my opinion, in view of the evidence on record, there is no scope for any interference in the findings of the Courts below, so far as the

conviction under Sections 279 and 304-A IPC is concerned. Hence, the conviction of the petitioner under Sections 279 and 304-A IPC is upheld.

However, the fact remains that the present FIR was registered on 06.12.2011 and by now, the petitioner has undergone the actual sentence of 09

months and 20 days as on 01.11.2021. He has also earned remission of 02 months and 02 days.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court in State of Punjab Vs. Saurabh Bakshi, 2015(2) RCR (Criminal) 495, while setting aside the order of the High Court,

thereby reducing the sentence imposed upon the accused i.e. 1 year to the period already undergone by him i.e. 24, days, awarded the sentence of six

months to the accused-respondent therein. It was held as under:-

17. In the instant case the factum of rash and negligent driving has been established. This court has been constantly noticing the increase in number

of road accidents and has also noticed how the vehicle drivers have been totally rash and negligent. It seems to us driving in a drunken state, in a rash

and negligent manner or driving with youthful adventurous enthusiasm as if there are no traffic rules or no discipline of law has come to the centre

stage.

The protagonists, as we perceive, have lost all respect for law. A man with the means has, in possibility, graduated himself to harbour the idea that he

can escape from the substantive sentence by payment of compensation. Neither the law nor the court that implements the law should ever get

oblivious of the fact that in such accidents precious lives are lost or the victims who survive are crippled for life which, in a way, worse than death.

Such developing of notions is a dangerous phenomenon in an orderly society. Young age cannot be a plea to be accepted in all circumstances. Life to

the poor or the impecunious is as worth living for as it is to the rich and the luxuriously temperamental. Needless to say, the principle of sentencing

recognizes the corrective measures but there are occasions when the deterrence is an imperative necessity depending upon the facts of the case. In

our opinion, it is a fit case where we are constrained to say that the High Court has been swayed away by the passion of mercy in applying the

principle that payment of compensation is a factor for reduction of sentence to 24 days. It is absolutely in the realm of misplaced sympathy. It is, in a

way mockery of justice. Because justice is ""the crowning glory"", ""the sovereign mistress"" and ""queen of virtue"" as Cicero had said. Such a crime

blights not only the lives of the victims but of many others around them. It ultimately shatters the faith of the public in judicial system. In our view, the

sentence of one year as imposed by the trial Magistrate which has been affirmed by the appellate court should be reduced to six months.

It may be noticed that though there is another case bearing FIR No.96/2018, registered against the petitioner for the offences under Sections 279 and

304-A IPC, at Police Station Hiranagar, Jammu and Kashmir, yet the fact remains that the said case is still pending trial. Therefore, in the present

case, which is of the year 2011, the prayer of the learned counsel for the petitioner for reducing the petitioner's sentence to the period already

undergone, can be considered and allowed in terms of the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Saurabh Bakshi's case (supra).

In view of the above, while upholding the conviction of the petitioner under Sections 279 and 304-A IPC, the substantive sentence imposed upon the

petitioner is reduced to the one already undergone by him. The fine imposed upon the petitioner along with its default clause, under the aforesaid

section is maintained. Apart from that, the petitioner is directed to pay a sum of Rs.25,000/- as compensation to the legal heirs of deceased-

Sukhwinder Singh, within a period of two months from today. It is made clear that in case, the compensation amount is not paid within the time

stipulated, the present revision petition shall be deemed to have been dismissed. The petitioner be released forthwith, if not required in any other case,

and further subject to the payment of fine, if not already paid.

Revision Petition is disposed of in the above terms.