

Om Dutt Vs State Of H.P And Others

Criminal Miscellaneous Petition (Main) No. 765 Of 2022

Court: High Court Of Himachal Pradesh

Date of Decision: Sept. 1, 2022

Acts Referred:

Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973 " Section 173, 320, 437, 482#Indian Penal Code, 1860
" Section 120B, 147, 148, 149, 307, 323, 420, 452, 467, 468, 471, 506

Hon'ble Judges: Sandeep Sharma, J

Bench: Single Bench

Advocate: Mukul Sood, Narinder Guleria, Devender Sharma

Final Decision: Disposed Of

Judgement

Sandeep Sharma, J

1. By way of instant petition filed under S. 482 CrPC, prayer has been made on behalf of the petitioner for quashing of FIR No. 32, dated 20.3.2022

under Ss. 279, 337 and 338 IPC and Ss. 192 and 196 of the Motor Vehicles Act registered at Police Station Gagret, Tehsil Ghanari, District Una,

Himachal Pradesh alongwith consequential proceedings i.e. Police Challan No. 73/2022 under Ss. 279, 337, 338 IPC pending in the court of learned

Judicial Magistrate First Class, Court No.2, Amb, District Una, Himachal Pradesh on the basis of compromise, Annexure P-2.

2. Precisely, the facts of the case, as emerge from the record, are that the FIR sought to be quashed in the instant proceedings came to be instituted at

the behest of respondent No.4 Smt. Geeta Devi, who alleged that on 20.3.2022, she alongwith her son and daughter, Raghav Chauhan and Kriti Devi

and one neighbourer, Smt Urmila Devi (respondents Nos. 5 to 7 herein) had gone to a temple in an auto bearing registration No. PB-04AC-2869,

being driven by the petitioner. She alleged that at 11.00 am, when the aforesaid auto reached near Dehra Di Khadd, petitioner lost control over the

vehicle and it overturned, as a consequence of which, all the occupants of the auto suffered injuries. On the basis of aforesaid statement made by

respondent No.4 FIR sought to be quashed in the instant proceedings came to be registered against the petitioner. Though after completion of

investigation police presented challan in the court of learned Judicial Magistrate First Class, Court No.;2, Amb, District Una, Himachal Pradesh where

Police Challan No. 73/2022 is pending, but before same could be taken to its logical end, petitioner and respondent Nos. 4 and 7, have compromised

the matter. In the aforesaid background, the petitioner has approached this Court for quashing of FIR alongwith consequential proceedings, pending in

the competent Court of law, on the basis of compromise, Annexure P-2.

3. Petitioner as well as respondent No. 4 to 7 have come present in the court and respondents Nos. 4 to 7 are being represented by Mr Devender

Sharma Advocate. Mr. Sunny Datwalia, learned Assistant Advocate General has placed on record status report issued under the signatures of Station

House Officer Gagret, District Una, Himachal Pradesh, perusal whereof clearly reveals that the parties have entered into compromise and both have

resolved to settle the dispute inter se them amicably. Aforesaid status report is taken on record.

4. Respondent No.4, Geeta Devi, at whose instance, FIR came to be lodged as well as injured namely Raghav Chauhan Preeti Devi and Urmila Devi

(respondents Nos. 5 to 7) are present in the court. Since respondents Nos. 5 and 6 are minors, their statements were not recorded but r.s Nos. 4 and 7

state on oath that they of their own volition and without any external pressure have entered into compromise with the petitioner and they have resolved

to settle the dispute inter se them amicably. They state that accident did not occur on account of rash and negligent driving of petitioner rather on

account of bad condition of road. They state that since they were duly taken care of by the petitioner, while they were being medically treated and

they have been duly compensated by the petitioner, they do not wish to prosecute the case against the petitioner and have no objection in case prayer

made on behalf of the petitioner for quashing of FIR as well as consequential proceedings is accepted and the petitioner is acquitted. While admitting

the contents of compromise, Annexure P-2 to be true, they also admit their signatures, thereupon. Their statements are taken on record.

5. After hearing aforesaid statement made by respondent Nos. 4 and 7, Mr. Narinder Guleria, learned Additional Advocate General fairly states that

no fruitful purpose would be served in case FIR and as well as consequential proceedings are allowed to continue against the accused. He states that

the chances of conviction of the petitioner are bleak and remote on account of statements made by the respondent No.4/complainant and respondent

No.7, as such, respondent-State shall have no objection in case prayer made on behalf of the petitioners for compounding of the offence is accepted.

6. The question which now needs consideration is whether FIR in question can be ordered to be quashed when Hon'ble Apex Court in Narinder Singh

and others versus State of Punjab and another (2014)6 SCC 466 has specifically held that power under S. 482 CrPC is not to be exercised in the

cases which involve heinous and serious offences of mental depravity or offences like murder, rape, dacoity, etc. Such offences are not private in

nature and have a serious impact on society.

7. At this stage, it would be relevant to take note of the judgment passed by Hon'ble Apex Court in Narinder Singh (supra), whereby the Hon'ble

Apex Court has formulated guidelines for accepting the settlement and quashing the proceedings or refusing to accept the settlement with direction to

continue with the criminal proceedings. Perusal of judgment referred to above clearly depicts that in para 29.1, Hon'ble Apex Court has returned

the findings that power conferred under Section 482 of the Code is to be distinguished from the power which lies in the Court to compound the

offences under Section 320 of the Code. No doubt, under Section 482 of the Code, the High Court has inherent power to quash criminal proceedings

even in those cases which are not compoundable and where the parties have settled the matter between themselves, however, this power is to be

exercised sparingly and with great caution. Para Nos. 29 to 29.7 of the judgment are reproduced as under:-

“29. In view of the aforesaid discussion, we sum up and lay down the following principles by which the High Court would be guided in giving

adequate treatment to the settlement between the parties and exercising its power under Section 482 of the Code while accepting the settlement and

quashing the proceedings or refusing to accept the settlement with direction to continue with the criminal proceedings:

29.1 Power conferred under Section 482 of the Code is to be distinguished from the power which lies in the Court to compound the offences under

Section 320 of the Code. No doubt, under Section 482 of the Code, the High Court has inherent power to quash the criminal proceedings even in those

cases which are not compoundable, where the parties have settled the matter between themselves. However, this power is to be exercised sparingly

and with caution.

29.2. When the parties have reached the settlement and on that basis petition for quashing the criminal proceedings is filed, the guiding factor in such

cases would be to secure:

(i) ends of justice, or

(ii) to prevent abuse of the process of any Court.

While exercising the power under Section 482 Cr.P.C the High Court is to form an opinion on either of the aforesaid two objectives.

29.3. Such a power is not to be exercised in those prosecutions which involve heinous and serious offences of mental depravity or offences like murder,

rape, dacoity, etc. Such offences are not private in nature and have a serious impact on society. Similarly, for offences alleged to have been

committed under special statute like the Prevention of Corruption Act or the offences committed by Public Servants while working in that capacity are

not to be quashed merely on the basis of compromise between the victim and the offender.

29.4. On the other, those criminal cases having overwhelmingly and pre-dominantly civil character, particularly those arising out of commercial

transactions or arising out of matrimonial relationship or family disputes should be quashed when the parties have resolved their entire disputes among

themselves.

29.5. While exercising its powers, the High Court is to examine as to whether the possibility of conviction is remote and bleak and continuation of

criminal cases would put the accused to great oppression and prejudice and extreme injustice would be caused to him by not quashing the criminal

cases.

29.6. Offences under Section 307 IPC would fall in the category of heinous and serious offences and therefore is to be generally treated as crime

against the society and not against the individual alone. However, the High Court would not rest its decision merely because there is a mention of

Section 307 IPC in the FIR or the charge is framed under this provision. It would be open to the High Court to examine as to whether incorporation of

Section 307 IPC is there for the sake of it or the prosecution has collected sufficient evidence, which if proved, would lead to proving the charge under

Section 307 IPC. For this purpose, it would be open to the High Court to go by the nature of injury sustained, whether such injury is inflicted on the

vital/delegate parts of the body, nature of weapons used etc. Medical report in respect of injuries suffered by the victim can generally be the guiding

factor. On the basis of this prima facie analysis, the High Court can examine as to whether there is a strong possibility of conviction or the chances of

conviction are remote and bleak. In the former case it can refuse to accept the settlement and quash the criminal proceedings whereas in the later

case it would be permissible for the High Court to accept the plea compounding the offence based on complete settlement between the parties. At this

stage, the Court can also be swayed by the fact that the settlement between the parties is going to result in harmony between them which may

improve their future relationship.

29.7. While deciding whether to exercise its power under Section 482 of the Code or not, timings of settlement play a crucial role. Those cases where

the settlement is arrived at immediately after the alleged commission of offence and the matter is still under investigation, the High Court may be

liberal in accepting the settlement to quash the criminal proceedings/investigation. It is because of the reason that at this stage the investigation is still

on and even the charge sheet has not been filed. Likewise, those cases where the charge is framed but the evidence is yet to start or the evidence is

still at infancy stage, the High Court can show benevolence in exercising its powers favourably, but after prima facie assessment of the

circumstances/material mentioned above. On the other hand, where the prosecution evidence is almost complete or after the conclusion of the

evidence the matter is at the stage of argument, normally the High Court should refrain from exercising its power under Section 482 of the Code, as in

such cases the trial court would be in a position to decide the case finally on merits and to come to a conclusion as to whether the offence under Section

307 IPC is committed or not.

Similarly, in those cases where the conviction is already recorded by the trial court and the matter is at the appellate stage before the High Court,

mere compromise between the parties would not be a ground to accept the same resulting in acquittal of the offender who has already been convicted

by the trial court. Here charge is proved under Section 307 IPC and conviction is already recorded of a heinous crime and, therefore, there is no

question of sparing a convict found guilty of such a crime.

8. Careful perusal of para 29.3 of the judgment suggests that such a power is not to be exercised in the cases which involve heinous and serious

offences of mental depravity or offences like murder, rape, dacoity, etc. Such offences are not private in nature and have a serious impact on society.

Apart from this, offences committed under special statute like the Prevention of Corruption Act or the offences committed by Public Servants while

working in that capacity are not to be quashed merely on the basis of compromise between the victim and the offender. On the other hand, those

criminal cases having overwhelmingly and predominantly civil character, particularly arising out of commercial transactions or arising out of

matrimonial relationship or family disputes may be quashed when the parties have resolved their entire disputes among themselves.

9. The Hon'ble Apex Court in case *Gian Singh v. State of Punjab and anr.* (2012) 10 SCC 303 has held that power of the High Court in quashing

of the criminal proceedings or FIR or complaint in exercise of its inherent power is distinct and different from the power of a Criminal Court for

compounding offences under Section 320 Cr.PC. Even in the judgment passed in *Narinder Singh's* case, the Hon'ble Apex Court has held

that while exercising inherent power of quashment under Section 482 Cr.PC the Court must have due regard to the nature and gravity of the crime

and its social impact and it cautioned the Courts not to exercise the power for quashing proceedings in heinous and serious offences of mental

depravity, murder, rape, dacoity etc. However subsequently, the Hon'ble Apex Court in *Dimpey Gujral and Ors. vs. Union Territory through*

Administrator, UT, Chandigarh and Ors. (2013) 11 SCC 497 has also held as under:-

"7. In certain decisions of this Court in view of the settlement arrived at by the parties, this Court quashed the FIRs though some of the offences

were non-compoundable. A two Judges Bench of this court doubted the correctness of those decisions. Learned Judges felt that in those

decisions, this court had permitted compounding of non-compoundable offences. The said issue was, therefore, referred to a larger bench.

The larger Bench in *Gian Singh v. State of Punjab* (2012) 10 SCC 303 considered the relevant provisions of the Code and the judgments of this court

and concluded as under: (SCC pp. 342-43, para 61)

61. The position that emerges from the above discussion can be summarised thus: the power of the High Court in quashing a criminal proceeding or

FIR or complaint in exercise of its inherent jurisdiction is distinct and different from the power given to a criminal court for compounding the offences

under Section 320 of the Code. Inherent power is of wide plenitude with no statutory limitation but it has to be exercised in accord with the guideline

engrafted in such power viz; (i) to secure the ends of justice or (ii) to prevent abuse of the process of any Court. In what cases power to quash the

criminal proceeding or complaint or F.I.R may be exercised where the offender and victim have settled their dispute would depend on the facts and

circumstances of each case and no category can be prescribed. However, before exercise of such power, the High Court must have due regard to the

nature and gravity of the crime. Heinous and serious offences of mental depravity or offences like murder, rape, dacoity, etc. cannot be fittingly

quashed even though the victim or victim's family and the offender have settled the dispute. Such offences are not private in nature and have

serious impact on society. Similarly, any compromise between the victim and offender in relation to the offences under special statutes like Prevention

of Corruption Act or the offences committed by public servants while working in that capacity etc; cannot provide for any basis for quashing criminal

proceedings involving such offences. But the criminal cases having overwhelmingly and pre-dominantly civil flavour stand on different footing for the

purposes of quashing, particularly the offences arising from commercial, financial, mercantile, civil, partnership or such like transactions or the

offences arising out of matrimony relating to dowry, etc. or the family disputes where the wrong is basically private or personal in nature and the

parties have resolved their entire dispute. In this category of cases, High Court may quash criminal proceedings if in its view, because of the

compromise between the offender and victim, the possibility of conviction is remote and bleak and continuation of criminal case would put accused to

great oppression and prejudice and extreme injustice would be caused to him by not quashing the criminal case despite full and complete settlement

and compromise with the victim. In other words, the High Court must consider whether it would be unfair or contrary to the interest of justice to

continue with the criminal proceeding or continuation of the criminal proceeding would tantamount to abuse of process of law despite settlement and

compromise between the victim and wrongdoer and whether to secure the ends of justice, it is appropriate that criminal case is put to an end and if the

answer to the above question(s) is in affirmative, the High Court shall be well within its jurisdiction to quash the criminal proceeding. (emphasis

supplied)

8. In the light of the above observations of this court in Gian Singh, we feel that this is a case where the continuation of criminal proceedings would

tantamount to abuse of process of law because the alleged offences are not heinous offences showing extreme depravity nor are they against the

society. They are offences of a personal nature and burying them would bring about peace and amity between the two sides. In the circumstances of

the case, FIR No. 163 dated 26.10.2006 registered under Section 147, 148, 149, 323, 307, 452 and 506 of the IPC at Police Station Sector 3,

Chandigarh and all consequential proceedings arising there from including the final report presented under Section 173 of the Code and charges

framed by the trial Court are hereby quashed. ¶

10. Hon'ble Apex Court in its judgment dated 4th October, 2017, titled as Parbatbhai Aahir @ Parbatbhai Bhimsinhbhai Karmur and others versus

State of Gujarat and Another, passed in Criminal Appeal No.1723 of 2017 arising out of SLP(Cr) No.9549 of 2016, reiterated the principles/

parameters laid down in Narinder Singh's case supra for accepting the settlement and quashing the proceedings. It would be profitable to

reproduce para No. 13 to 15 of the judgment herein:

¶"13. The same principle was followed in Central Bureau of Investigation v. Maninder Singh (2016) 1 SCC 389 by a bench of two learned Judges of

this Court. In that case, the High Court had, in the exercise of its inherent power under Section 482 quashed proceedings under Sections 420, 467, 468

and 471 read with Section 120-B of the Penal Code. While allowing the appeal filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation Mr Justice Dipak Misra

(as the learned Chief Justice then was) observed that the case involved allegations of forgery of documents to embezzle the funds of the bank. In such

a situation, the fact that the dispute had been settled with the bank would not justify a recourse to the power under Section 482:

¶"In economic offences Court must not only keep in view that money has been paid to the bank which has been defrauded but also the society at

large. It is not a case of simple assault or a theft of a trivial amount; but the offence with which we are concerned is well planned and was committed

with a deliberate design with an eye of personal profit regardless of consequence to the society at large. To quash the proceeding merely on the

ground that the accused has settled the amount with the bank would be a misplaced sympathy. If the prosecution against the economic offenders are

not allowed to continue, the entire community is aggrieved.

14. In a subsequent decision in State of Tamil Nadu v R Vasanthi Stanley (2016) 1 SCC 376, the court rejected the submission that the first

respondent was a woman who was following the command of her husband and had signed certain documents without being aware of the

nature of the fraud which was being perpetrated on the bank. Rejecting the submission, this Court held that:

¶"... Lack of awareness, knowledge or intent is neither to be considered nor accepted in economic offences. The submission assiduously presented

on gender leaves us unimpressed. An offence under the criminal law is an offence and it does not depend upon the gender of an accused. True it is,

there are certain provisions in Code of Criminal Procedure relating to exercise of jurisdiction Under Section 437, etc. therein but that altogether

pertains to a different sphere. A person committing a murder or getting involved in a financial scam or forgery of documents, cannot claim discharge

or acquittal on the ground of her gender as that is neither constitutionally nor statutorily a valid argument. The offence is gender neutral in this case.

We say no more on this score

A grave criminal offence or serious economic offence or for that matter the offence that has the potentiality to create a dent in the financial

health of the institutions, is not to be quashed on the ground that there is delay in trial or the principle that when the matter has been settled it should be

quashed to avoid the load on the system

15. The broad principles which emerge from the precedents on the subject may be summarized in the following propositions:

(i) Section 482 preserves the inherent powers of the High Court to prevent an abuse of the process of any court or to secure the ends of justice. The

provision does not confer new powers. It only recognizes and preserves powers which inhere in the High Court;

(ii) The invocation of the jurisdiction of the High Court to quash a First Information Report or a criminal proceeding on the ground that a settlement

has been arrived at between the offender and the victim is not the same as the invocation of jurisdiction for the purpose of compounding an offence.

While compounding an offence, the power of the court is governed by the provisions of Section 320 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. The

power to quash under Section 482 is attracted even if the offence is non-compoundable.

(iii) In forming an opinion whether a criminal proceeding or complaint should be quashed in exercise of its jurisdiction under Section 482, the High

Court must evaluate whether the ends of justice would justify the exercise of the inherent power;

(iv) While the inherent power of the High Court has a wide ambit and plenitude it has to be exercised; (i) to secure the ends of justice or (ii) to prevent

an abuse of the process of any court;

(v) The decision as to whether a complaint or First Information Report should be quashed on the ground that the offender and victim have settled the

dispute, revolves ultimately on the facts and circumstances of each case and no exhaustive elaboration of principles can be formulated;

vi) In the exercise of the power under Section 482 and while dealing with a plea that the dispute has been settled, the High Court must have due

regard to the nature and gravity of the offence. Heinous and serious offences involving mental depravity or offences such as murder, rape and dacoity

cannot appropriately be quashed though the victim or the family of the victim have settled the dispute. Such offences are, truly speaking, not private in

nature but have a serious impact upon society. The decision to continue with the trial in such cases is founded on the overriding element of public

interest in punishing persons for serious offences;

(vii) As distinguished from serious offences, there may be criminal cases which have an overwhelming or predominant element of a civil dispute. They

stand on a distinct footing in so far as the exercise of the inherent power to quash is concerned;

(viii) Criminal cases involving offences which arise from commercial, financial, mercantile, partnership or similar transactions with an essentially civil

flavour may in appropriate situations fall for quashing where parties have settled the dispute;

(ix) In such a case, the High Court may quash the criminal proceeding if in view of the compromise between the disputants, the possibility of a

conviction is remote and the continuation of a criminal proceeding would cause oppression and prejudice; and

(x) There is yet an exception to the principle set out in propositions (viii) and (ix) above. Economic offences involving the financial and economic well-

being of the state have implications which lie beyond the domain of a mere dispute between private disputants. The High Court would be justified in

declining to quash where the offender is involved in an activity akin to a financial or economic fraud or misdemeanour. The consequences of the act

complained of upon the financial or economic system will weigh in the balance.Ã¢â€

11. In the case at hand, the offences alleged to have been committed by the accused do not pertain to offence of moral turpitude or heinous offences

rather the offences alleged to have been committed are petty offence and more over compromise has been arrived at inter se parties, as such, no

fruitful purpose would be served in continuing with criminal prosecution of the petitioner, more so when complainant has compromised the matter with

the accused and complainant is no more interested in pursuing the case further and there are bleak and remote chances of conviction of accused and

as such, this court sees no impediment in accepting the prayer made by petitioners for quashing of FIR.

12. Consequently, in view of the aforesaid discussion as well as law laid down by the Hon'ble Apex Court (supra), FIR No. 32, dated 20.3.2022

under Ss. 279, 337 and 338 IPC and Ss. 192 and 196 of the Motor Vehicles Act registered at Police Station Gagret, Tehsil Ghanari, District Una,

Himachal Pradesh alongwith consequential proceedings i.e. Police Challan No. 73/2022 under Ss. 279, 337, 338 IPC pending in the court of learned

Judicial Magistrate First Class, Court No.2, Amb, District Una, Himachal Pradesh, are quashed and set aside. Petitioner is acquitted of the charges

framed against him in the said FIR/proceedings.

13. The petition stands disposed of in the aforesaid terms, alongwith all pending applications.

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