
Moti Lal Vs Emperor

None

Court: Allahabad High Court

Date of Decision: July 24, 1939

Acts Referred:

Uttar Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1916 " Section 211, 307

Citation: AIR 1939 All 701 : (1939) 9 AWR 605

Hon'ble Judges: Mulla, J

Bench: Division Bench

Final Decision: Allowed

Judgement

@JUDGMENTTAG-ORDER

Mulla, J.

This is an application in revision by one Rai Sahib Moti Lal who has been convicted u/s 307, U.P. Municipalities Act and has

been fined Rs. 10. The conviction was recorded in the first instance by a Magistrate of the second class who imposed a fine of Rs. 100. The

applicant went up in appeal to the District Magistrate who upheld the conviction but reduced the fine to a sum of Rs. 10 only in view of the

careless procedure adopted by the Municipal Board. The applicant then went up in revision to the learned Sessions Judge of Bulandshahr who has

again uphold the conviction and the sentence. Hence the application in revision. The facts of the case may briefly be stated as follows : In Win town

of Khurja there is a block of 17 shops which was originally owned by one Mt. Jumni Kunwar. This property was put to auction sale in execution

of a decree. It was sold in two lots : one of 10 shops and the other of 7 shops. The former lot was purchased by one Puran Mal and the latter by

the present applicant. Prior to that sale however a notice u/s 211, U.P. Municipalities Act, had been given by the executive officer of the Municipal

Board, Khurja, to Mt. Jumni Kunwar asking her to remove certain projections over the Municipal drain. Subsequent to the auction sale a notice

was again given by the executive officer under that Section to the two purchasers, Puran Mal and the applicant. As an important argument in the

case turns upon that notice it may well be set out in extenso as follows:

Under Section 211, U.P. Municipalities Act (Act 2 of 1916), Mt. Jumni Kuer, widow of late L Sohan Lal Vaish Churuwal of Khurja was served

with a notice to remove the projection and structure overhanging and projecting over the Municipal drain from the shops in Bazar Nanpazan

Sabzimandi; vide copy of the notice enclosed herewith. She went in appeal against the notice to the Commissioner, Meerut Division, and her

appeal was rejected. Since you have purchased some of these shops the compliance of the notice, so far as it relates to the shops in your

possession, rests with you and therefore you are required to make the compliance of this notice within 30 days of the receipt thereof, failing which

the Municipal Board may cause this work to be executed u/s 307(a) of the aforesaid Act and shall recover all expenses incurred by it thereon from

you in the manner provided by Ch. 6 of the said Act and further legal action will be taken against you u/s 307(b) of the said Act, for failure to

comply with the above notice.

2. An important point to be noted about this notice which shall have to be referred to again is that it does not relate to any specific shops in the

applicant's possession. All that it tells the applicant is that he had purchased some of the shops belonging, to Mt. Jumni Kuer to whom a notice u/s

211, U.P. Municipalities Act, had previously been given and requires the applicant to comply with the terms of the said notice with reference to

any shops that might be in his possession. The applicant filed an appeal from this notice to the Municipal Board under the provisions of Section 60,

Municipalities Act. This appeal was filed on 16th November 1936, though the notice referred to above was issued on 29th October 1936. An

attempt was made by learned Counsel for the Municipal Board to argue the point that this appeal was barred by time and hence there was no valid

appeal pending before the Board at any time. This point was however never raised by the Municipal Board in any one of the Courts below and I

am not prepared to take cognizance of it at this stage. I shall assume for the purposes of the case that the appeal was validly filed before the

Municipal Board. The fact remains that it was not decided by the Board until 8th November 1937 on which date it was dismissed and the notice

issued by the Executive Officer was confirmed. In the meantime a dispute had arisen between the applicant and Puran Mal relating to the exact

location of the shops respectively purchased by them. It appears that the applicant had been put in possession of seven shops which according to

Puran Mal had really been purchased by him. This dispute resulted in an objection under Order 21, Rule 100 being filed by Puran Mal in which he

claimed possession of the seven shops over which the applicant had been given possession. The objection was decided in favour of Puran Mal and

as found by all the Courts below the applicant was dispossessed of the seven shops over which he originally obtained possession. The order of the

Civil Court allowing Puran Mal's objection was passed on 14th August 1937, that is, long before the decision of the applicant's appeal by the

Municipal Board. It is not quite clear whether the applicant placed that decision of the Civil Court before the Municipal Board at the hearing of the

appeal. But the fact remains that the appeal was dismissed and the notice issued by the Executive Officer was confirmed. The applicant treated the

notice as one relating to the seven shops over which he was in possession at the time he received it, and he consequently thought that he could not

comply with its terms in consequence of the order of dispossession passed by the Civil Court. The notice was not therefore complied with and the

Municipal Board in these circumstances instituted a complaint against the applicant u/s 307, U.P. Municipalities Act.

3. The applicant appears to have taken some objections to the validity of the notice in the Criminal Court and further pleaded that it was not

possible for him to comply with the notice in view of his dispossession in consequence of the Civil Court's order. All the Courts below held in view

of certain decisions of this Court that the applicant was not entitled to question the validity of the notice. It appears however that the Appellate

Court as well as the learned Sessions Judge were of opinion that it was open to the applicant to appeal from the order passed by the Municipal

Board to the District Magistrate under the provisions of Section 318, U.P. Municipalities Act, and as he had failed to avail himself of that remedy it

was not open to him to challenge the validity of the notice in the Criminal Court. The Courts below seem to be of the opinion that the decisions of

this Court which they have referred to lay down the principle that where a person does not avail himself of the remedy provided by the

Municipalities Act he cannot challenge the validity of the notice in a Criminal Court. I may state at once that in arriving at that conclusion the Courts

below have not correctly interpreted the decisions of this Court. The principle which they lay down is that there is a procedure provided by the

U.P. Municipalities Act for challenging the validity of a notice issued under the provisions of that Act. That procedure may end with an appeal to

the Municipal Board or it may involve an appeal to the District Magistrate. Whatever the procedure may be that alone has to be followed by a

person who is aggrieved by a notice issued under the provisions of the Municipalities Act. And it is only in the course of that procedure that the

validity of the notice can be questioned and decided. The Criminal Court trying a person u/s 307, U.P. Municipalities Act, can never be concerned

with the question as to whether a notice issued under the provisions of the U.P. Municipalities Act was a regular and valid notice or otherwise. If

the applicant in the present case had appealed to the District Magistrate from the order of the Board he would not by doing so have acquired a

right to challenge the validity of the notice in the Criminal Court. I am assuming for a moment that he could appeal to the District Magistrate from

the order passed by the Board. As a matter of fact the position is just the other way. In this case the notice had been issued by the Executive

Officer and not the Municipal Board. Both the Executive Officer and the Board can issue a notice u/s 211, U.P. Municipalities Act. The former

can do so only in cases where no question of compensation arises. In all cases in which a question of compensation has to be considered it is only

the Board that can issue a notice u/s 211. Now Section 318 which provides for an appeal to the District Magistrate from an order passed by the

Board runs as follows:

Any person aggrieved by any order or direction made by a Board under the powers conferred upon it by Sections 118(1), 186, 205(1), 208,

211, 222(6), 241(2), 245, 278 and 285 or under a bye-law made under heading ""G"" of Section 298 may within 30 days from the date of such

direction or order, exclusive of the time requisite for obtaining a copy thereof appeal to such officer as the Local Government may appoint for the

purpose of hearing such appeals or any of them or failing such appointment to the District Magistrate.

4. Now the question is whether the expression ""any order or direction made by a Board"" can possibly refer to an order passed by the Board upon

appeal from a notice issued by the Executive Officer. In my judgment the answer is clearly in the negative. The Act does not in my opinion provide

for a second appeal to the District Magistrate from an order passed by the Board on appeal. It was not therefore open in my judgment to the

applicant to file an appeal before the District Magistrate. But as I have stated above that does not affect the legal position at all. The position still

remains that the Criminal Court cannot enter into the question of the validity of a notice issued under the provisions of the Municipalities Act.

Learned Counsel for the applicant strenuously contended that it was open to the Criminal Court to consider the question whether the notice was

one that had been validly issued under any of the provisions of the U.P. Municipalities Act. As I have already stated I do not agree with that

contention which is not in my opinion supported by the decisions of this Court in *Bajinath Ram Vs. Emperor*, *Municipal Board Vs. Shiam Lal* and

Municipal Board Vs. Habib Ullah. As was a party to one of these cases, namely *Bajinath Ram Vs. Emperor*, I can definitely state that it was

never the intention of that decision to lay down that the Criminal Court could enter into the question as to whether a notice had been validly issued

under any of the provisions of the Municipalities Act. It was clearly held in that case that the procedure for challenging the validity of a notice is

specifically laid down in the Municipalities Act and the question of validity cannot be raised in any form before the Criminal Court. It is not

necessary for me to discuss the other two cases because I find that in the present case even if the Criminal Court had entered into the question of

validity it could not have arrived at any conclusion other than this that the notice when issued was perfectly valid. It is admitted that the applicant

had purchased certain shops and was in possession of some shops at the time when the notice was issued to him.

5. Now the question is whether the conviction of the applicant u/s 307, U.P. Municipalities Act, in these circumstances is correct or otherwise. An

argument that has been strenuously pressed by learned Counsel for the applicant and which appears to have considerable force behind it is that in

view of the order passed by the Civil Court dispossessing the applicant he was incapable of complying with the terms of the notice and he cannot

therefore be said to have failed to comply with the notice within the meaning of Section 307, U.P. Municipalities Act. I am prepared to concede

that the language of Section 307 necessarily implies that the person who fails to comply and thus renders himself liable to the penalty provided by

the law must have the power to comply. It would obviously be highly unreasonable in my judgment to hold a person guilty of not complying with

the notice when under the law he has not the power to do so. The point however remains in the present case that the applicant's conviction cannot

be set aside merely upon that ground. As I have stated above the notice issued to the applicant in the present case did not specifically relate to any

particular shops. All that it said was that the applicant had purchased some shops and it directed the applicant to comply with the notice with

regard to any shops that might be in his possession.

6. It is true that the applicant appears to have been dispossessed of certain shops over which he originally obtained possession; but the fact

remains that he and Puran Mal were the only two purchasers of the whole block of shops and all that happened in consequence of the proceeding

in the Civil Court was that he got seven shops other than those over which he had originally been given possession. It is true that there is no definite

evidence on record that he actually came into possession of the seven shops other than those from which he was dispossessed. But the fact

remains that he was declared to be the owner of seven shops and he must be presumed to have been in possession of the shops other than those

which came originally into his possession and from which he was dispossessed by the order of the Civil Court. It was therefore possible for him to

comply with the terms of the notice and his failure to do so brings him within the clutches of the law. I must however express my disapprobation of

the dilatory procedure adopted by the Municipal Board in this case and I endorse the remarks made by the Courts below. I think therefore that the

sentence passed upon the applicant in this case should only be nominal and nothing more. The result therefore is that I dismiss this application in

revision and uphold the applicant's conviction u/s 307, U.P. Municipalities Act, but reduce the fine imposed upon him to one-anna only. The fine if

any paid by the applicant over and above an anna shall be refunded.