

Suresh @ Hakla Vs State of Haryana

Court: Supreme Court of India

Date of Decision: April 7, 2008

Acts Referred: Arms Act, 1959 " Section 25

Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (CrPC) " Section 313

Penal Code, 1860 (IPC) " Section 148, 149, 302, 307, 395

Citation: (2008) 2 ACR 2146 : AIR 2008 SC 2042 : (2008) AIRSCW 2704 : (2008) 2 ALD(Cri) 131 : (2008) CriLJ 2619 : (2008) NCC 696 : (2008) 6 SCALE 76

Hon'ble Judges: P. Sathasivam, J; Arijit Pasayat, J

Bench: Division Bench

Advocate: Nagindra Rai, Rishi Malhotra and Prem Malhotra, for the Appellant; Naresh Bakshi and T.V. George, for the Respondent

Final Decision: Allowed

Judgement

Arijit Pasayat, J.

These Appeals have a common nexus and are disposed of by a common judgment. Two appeals were filed before the

Punjab and Haryana High Court i.e. Criminal Appeal No. 118 - DB of 2002 and Criminal Appeal No. 119 -DB of 2002. One Appeal was filed

by Suresh alias Hakla (appellant in Criminal Appeal No. 1295 of 2006) and another appeal was filed by Balwant and Ladh Ram (appellants in

Criminal Appeal No. 1296 of 2006). The High Court dismissed the Criminal Appeal No. 670- DB of 2001 filed by Balwant and Ladh Ram. The

High Court dealt with the factual and the legal position in detail in Criminal Appeal No. 670-DB of 2001 and dismissed the same. Another

Criminal Appeal i.e. No. 560 DB of 2002 was filed by accused Shamsher Singh. In the connected two appeals the decision was followed.

2. Background facts in a nutshell are as follows:

At about 9.30 A.M. on 15.7.1996 Ramesh (PW-14) accompanied by Mahender Sarpanch (hereinafter referred to as the "deceased"), Duli

Chand (PW-15), Dev Raj and Richh Pal were going in a Gypsy being driven by the deceased. As they had covered a distance of 2 = kms. and

reached near the Chitang canal situated in between villages Salemgarh and Mingnikhera, a Maruti Car having No. DL-4C/8434 came from the

opposite direction. As the car stopped close to the jeep, accused Shamsher Singh came out and fired a shot from a country made pistol which hit

the wind screen of the Gypsy, due to which deceased Mahender lost control with the result that the Gypsy skidded and stopped on the road side.

Thereupon, Shamsher Singh, Ladh Ram, Balwant, Pirthi Punic and 3/4 other persons came out of the car and pulled Mahender out from the

Gypsy. Shamsher Singh fired another shot hitting Mahender on the left side of the abdomen, whereas Ladh Ram fired a shot from his gun hitting

Mahender below his armpit on the left side and Balwant fired a shot from the country made pistol hitting Mahender on his right flank, while Siri

Chand fired a shot from his gun hitting him on his anus. Siri Chand also shouted that Mahender should not be spared because he had committed

the murder of his son Bhoop Singh. Pirthi Punic kept standing close-by pointing his gun at the witnesses and threatened that he would shoot them if

they intervened. The accused thereafter went through the pockets of Mahender and took out the license for his revolver, a driving license, an

identity card and a cheque for Rs. 50,000/- and some cash and also picked up the licensed gun of Ramesh, which was lying in the Gypsy, and then

drove away to village Kabrel. In the meantime, a Tata-407 truck came from the side of village Kabrel in which Subhash son of Tara Chand and

Shishpal son of Dariya Singh were travelling and Mahender was brought to the Civil Hospital, Hisar, where he was declared dead. In the firing,

Duli Chand, father of Mahender (PW-15) also suffered pellet injuries on his face, forehead and right arm. A wireless message was sent to the

police station, on which SI Dharam Chand (P-17) reached the Civil Hospital and recorded the statement of Ramesh (PW-14) at about 1.00 PM

and on its basis a formal FIR Ex-FN was registered at police station Sadar, Hisar at 1.40 PM, within the special report being delivered to the

Ilaqa Magistrate locally at 3.55 PM. The investigating Officer also took into possession the medico legal report of Duli Chand and after the post-

mortem examination, some pellets recovered from the dead body. Siri Chand, Prithvi and Shamsher Singh were arrested on 29.07.1996 and on

Shamsher's interrogation, a .12 bore pistol and five empty and two live cartridges were recovered. Likewise, on the disclosure statement made by

accused Prithvi, a .16 bore licensed gun belonging to Siri Chand and two empty and two live cartridges were recovered. Shamsher Singh also

made a disclosure statement and on its basis, a .12 bore pistol, which had allegedly been used in another murder committed by him on the same

day, was recovered. A case u/s 25 of the Arms Act was registered against accused Shamsher Singh as well. Accused-Makhan Singh who though

not named in the FIR but found to be involved in the incident, was arrested on 7.4.1998. On the completion of the investigation, the accused were

charged for offences punishable under Sections 148, 302 read with Sections 149, 307 read with Sections 149 and 395 of the Indian Penal Code,

1860 (in short "IPC") and as they pleaded not guilty, were brought to trial.

The prosecution in support of its case placed reliance, inter-alia on the evidence of Dr. Arun (PW-1) reported that no fracture had been seen in the

X-ray conducted by him, Dr. B.L. Bagri (PW-2) of the General Hospital, Hisar, who had examined Duli Chand at 12.25 PM on 15.7.1996 and

had found three injuries PW-3 Dr. J.S. Bhatia, the Senior Medical Officer, Government Hospital, Hisar, who had conducted the post-mortem

examination and had found five gun shot injuries on the dead body, the two eye witnesses Ramesh (PW14) and Duli Chand (PW-15), the last

namad being injured, SI Dharam Chand (PW-17), the Investigating Officer, and Inspector Avtar Singh (PW-21). The statements of the accused

were thereafter recorded u/s 313 Cr.P.C. and they denied the allegations leveled against them and claimed to be innocent. They also produced

two witnesses in defence, Charanjit Singh DSP (DW-1), who stated Balwant had not been present at the time of the incident and the first named

was entirely innocent, whereas Balwant was a part of the conspiracy which had led to the murder; and Sumer Singh (DW-2), who produced the

records to depose that Shamsher accused had been held guilty vide judgment dated 9.4.2001 in another murder committed on the same day.

The trial Court held that on the facts as brought on the record there was no delay in the lodging of the FIR; that there was no need to subject the

accused to an identification parade as they had already been identified at the time of the registration of the FIR; that the medical evidence

supported the ocular version; that the minor discrepancies in the evidence of the, eye witnesses could be ignored and the statements accepted as

being tries and that the metallic pieces, Exh.P14 and P15 recovered from, the dead body had been matched with the weapon recovered from

Shamsher accused. The Court then went to the involvement of each of the accused and opined that Balwant and Ladh Ram had been named in the

FIR, whereas Prithvi and Suresh though not named therein had figured in the supplementary statements of the witnesses and their involvement and

also clear from the statement of Duli Chand, the injured witness, and that Suresh aforesaid was also the driver of the Maruti Car in question. The

Court also held that Shamsher Singh was the main accused in the case. The Trial Court accordingly convicted and sentenced the accused as under:

All the accused u/s 302 of the Indian Penal To undergo rigorous imprisonment for life and to pay a fine of

Code Rs,5,000/- and in default of payment thereof to further undergo

rigorous imprisonment months.

All the accused u/s 307 read with Section 149 to undergo rigorous imprisonment for five years and to pay a fine of the Indian Penal Code of Rs. 1000/- and in default of i payment thereof to further undergo rigorous imprisonment for one month.

All the accused u/s 148 of the Indian Penal Code To undergo rigorous imprisonment for one year.

All the sentences were, however, ordered to run concurrently.

All appeals were dismissed by the High Court.

3. It is to be noted that the trial court primarily relied on the evidence of PWs. 14 & 15 i.e. Ramesh and Duli Chand. Duli Chand was the father of

the deceased who also suffered injuries on the face, forehead and right arm.

4. In support of the appeal, learned Counsel for the appellants submitted that the evidence of PWs. 14 & 15 does not inspire confidence. The

defence version that occurrence had not taken place around 9.30 A.M. but at 6.30 A.M. prima facie gets established because of the presence of

partial undigested food and faecal materials. The appellant Balwant and Ladh Ram belong to different villages and could not have been parties to

the alleged animosity to have any motive. The evidence of PW 15 should not have been relied upon as he cannot see beyond ten feet. The

evidence of Doctor - PW 2 established five injuries. There were five injuries noticed; none of which has been specifically attributed to Balwant and

Ladh Ram.

5. In support of the appeal filed by accused Suresh it is submitted that he was not named in the FIR and/or in the original statement. Subsequently

in the so called supplementary statement, his name surfaced. The role ascribed to him is differently described. The High Court noticed that he was

the driver of the car.

6. There is also major variance as to whether Suresh participated in pulling out the deceased, while one witness says he did and other says that he

was driving car.

7. Learned Counsel for the respondent-State on the other hand supported the judgment and submitted that because of concurrent findings

recorded, there was no scope for interference. So far as the appeal filed by Balwant Singh and Ladh Ram is concerned they were named in the

FIR, the role played by each one of them has been clearly described by PWs. 14 & 15. Their presence at the spot cannot be doubted. PW 15 is

an injured witness. As a matter of fact there has been recovery of the pellet. The stand that the evidence of Doctor (PW 2) shows fire arm injuries

is not possible is also not correct. He does not say so. On the contrary, he said that the possibility of injuries by fire arm cannot be ruled out. In

that view of the matter, the appeal so far as Balwant Singh and Ladh Ram is concerned is without merit, deserves dismissal. Criminal Appeal No.

1296 of 2006 is dismissed.

8. So far as the appeal filed by the accused Suresh is concerned as noted above he was not named in the FIR and in the original statement. His

role in the incident has been described in different manners by PWs 14 & 15. It is to be noted that Suresh was not known to the witnesses. In fact

it has been categorically noted by the High Court that PW-15 has accepted that he did not know him earlier. There was no Test Identification

Parade.

9. The High Court has drawn an inference that because he was a driver in pre-planned murder, the role of such driver is crucial. Such an inferential

conclusion is without any evidence to show participation of accused Suresh. While PW 15 stated that Suresh was threatening the witnesses who

were present, PW 14 gave a different version. He did not speak a word about the participation of accused Suresh. Looked at from any angle the

conviction of accused Suresh cannot be maintained and deserves to be set aside.

10. The appeal bearing No. 1295 of 2006 is allowed. The accused be set at liberty forthwith unless his custody is required in any other case.