
Meher Ali Khan Vs Aratunnessa Bibi

Appeal from Appellate Decree No. 20 of 1918

Court: Calcutta High Court

Date of Decision: July 10, 1919

Final Decision: Dismissed

Judgement

Shamsul Huda, J.

This appeal arises out of a suit for joint possession on declaration of title. Plaintiff alleged that the land described in Sch.

ka of the plaint belonged to her grandfather and that upon his death by a partition among his heirs her father Gholam Hossain got the whole of plot

kha. She accordingly as the daughter of Gholam Hossain claimed her legal share of this plot according to the Mahomedan law of inheritance. It has

not been disputed that if plot kha belonged exclusively to Gholam Hossain, Plaintiff is entitled to the share claimed by her. Defendant No. 2 who

contested the suit on the plea that he had purchased the land in suit from Defendant No. 3, admitted that this plot had fallen exclusively to the share

of Gholam Hossain upon partition but alleged that Gholam Hossain subsequently exchanged this plot with Defendant No. 3 and received from her

in exchange another piece of land that had fallen to her share. The learned Munsif found that the land on partition had fallen to the share of Gholam

Hossain, that the story of exchange alleged by the Defendant had not been established, that even if the exchange really took place it was ineffectual

without a registered deed and lastly that the fact of purchase by Defendant No. 2 from Defendant No. 3 had not been satisfactorily proved. Upon

these findings the learned Munsif decreed the Plaintiff's suit. On appeal by Defendant No. 2 the decree was upheld. The lower Appellate Court,

however, found the story of exchange to be true but agreed with the Munsif that without a registered document the exchange was void. He

expressed no clear opinion on the question whether the Defendant No. 2 had succeeded in proving his purchase from Defendant No. 3. The

Defendant No. 2 has preferred this appeal and on his Behalf it is argued that notwithstanding the absence of a registered document on the equitable

doctrine of part performance Plaintiff as the heir of Gholam Hossain cannot question the validity of the exchange, It seems to me that on the

authority of Walsh v. Lonsdale L.R. 21 Ch. Div. 9 (1882) and the decisions of this Court in which the principle laid down in that case was

followed, this contention must prevail. It is, however, urged on behalf of the Respondent, that the findings are not sufficient to justify the application

of the doctrine. Reliance is placed on the decision of Mr. Justice Farwell in Manchester Brewery Co. v. Coombs [1901] 2 Ch. 608, that the

doctrine is applicable only in those cases where specific performance can be obtained between the same parties in the same Court and at the same

time as the subsequent legal question falls to be determined. On this point there are no findings and I was at first inclined to send the case back but

after looking to the more recent authorities and having heard further arguments on the point I am of opinion that such a course is not necessary. It is

true that in some of the earlier cases decided by this Court, this limitation on the applicability of the doctrine was distinctly recognised. [See Bibi

Jawahir Kumari v. Chatterput Singh 2 C.L.J. 343 (1905), Secretary of State for India in Council v. A.H. Forbes 16 C.L.J. 217 (1912) and

Singheeram Poddar v. Bhagbat Chancier Nundi 11 C.L.J. 543 (1910)]. However, in the case of Puchha Lal v. Kunj Behari Lal 18 C.W.N. 445

(1913), where, as in the present case, the findings were not sufficient to show whether a suit for specific performance could be maintained, Jenkins,

C.J., observed as follows:-- ""It is quite true that the question whether the Defendants, first party, were entitled to bring a suit for specific

performance in vindication of their rights was not debated before the lower Appellate Court, but there is no matter brought to our notice which can

throw any serious doubt upon the Defendants' right to complete their right by such a suit."" The same remark applies to this case.

2. In a very recent case to which I was a party a different view was taken but in that case the later decisions bearing on the point to which I am

about to refer were not placed before the Court.

3. In Mohammad Musa v. Aghore Kumar Ganguli L.R. 42 I.A. 1 : S.C. ILR 42 Cal. 801; 19 C.W.N. 250 (1914), their Lordships of the Judicial

Committee laid down the principle without any such limitation. Their Lordships observed quoting the dictum of Sir John Strange in Putter v. Potter

1 Ves. Sen. 437, 441 (1750) that a contract if confessed or carried in part into execution will be binding on the parties and carried into further

execution in equity. In Khogendra Nath Chatterjee v. Sonatan Guha 20 C.W.N. 149 (1915), Sanderson, C.J., and Mr. Justice N. Chatterjea

applied the doctrine without any reference to the question whether the right to claim specific performance was or was not subsisting.

4. It was argued on behalf of the Respondent that although their Lordships of the Judicial Committee did not expressly refer to this question, the

case of Potter v. Potter 1 Ves. Sen. 437, 441 (1750) on which they rely recognizes this limitation of the doctrine. This is no doubt correct as will

appear from the following passage in the judgment of the Master of the Rolls:--

It will be the same, where vendor comes for specific performance and the agreement admitted. No doubt, but on such admission it will be

considered as an agreement from the time of transaction; so that on a bill by either party, the Court must have decreed execution, the estate as

testator's from June 1744, and the money the vendor's.

5. But at the same time the fact cannot be overlooked that their Lordships of the Judicial Committee were dealing, with an agreement entered into

30 or 40 years before the suit and if the question of limitation for enforcing a claim for specific performance was considered material their Lordships

would have referred to it. There is the further fact in this case that the Defendant No. 2 is in possession of the land in suit. If the Plaintiffs claim is to

be decreed by reason of the transaction not being "clothed in those legal forms to which finality attaches" after the bargain has been acted upon,

she could only do so in equity by making restitution in respect of the property which Gholam Hossain obtained from Defendant No. 3. Such

restitution is now impossible by the reason of the fact that the property has been sold to a third party. I, therefore, think that on these grounds the

Plaintiff is not entitled to a decree.

6. It is next argued on behalf of the Respondent that the Plaintiff had denied in the plaint that the Defendant No. 2 was a bond fide purchaser from

Defendant No. 3 and although the first Court decided this issue against the Plaintiff, she was entitled to a decision of the Appellate Court on the

point. It seems to me that there is no substance in the argument. The lower Appellate Court expressly finds that Defendant No. 2 was in

possession and not Defendant No. 3 and clearly meant to find that the Defendant No. 2 was a bond fide purchaser. Besides even as benamidar of

Defendant No. 3 he is entitled to take any defence that the Defendant No. 3 might have taken and it is immaterial whether the title vests in the one

or the other. Chowdhuri Gur Narayan v. Sheo Lal Singh ILR 46 Cal. 564 : S.C. C.W.N. 521 (P.C.). Upon this view of the case I decree the

appeal and dismiss the Plaintiff's suit. But in view of the fact that if this question had been raised before the lower Appellate Court an appeal to this

Court might not have been necessary, the Defendant Appellant though successful must pay the costs of the Respondents in this appeal. He is

however, entitled to the costs of the Courts below from the Plaintiff.