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STATE OF HARYANA

v.

RAM PAL AND ORS.

FEBRUARY 7, 2005

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[ARIJIT PASAYAT AND S.H. KAPADIA, JJ.]

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*Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973—Section 378(3)—Trial for offences under IPC—Decision of trial Court—Application u/s 378(3)—Summary dismissal by High Court—On appeal, held: In the facts of the case trial Court did not appraise the entire evidence—On account of such lapse High Court ought to have re-appreciated the entire evidence independently—Absence of reasons has rendered the High Court order not sustainable—Penal Code, 1860.*

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*Judgment—Reasons—Recording—Requirement for—Held: Right to reason is an indispensable part of sound judicial system—It is requirement of principle of natural justice—Reasons introduce clarity in an order—Principles of Natural Justice—Administrative Law.*

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Respondents-accused were tried for offences punishable u/ss. 148, 302, 452, 506, 323 r/w Section 149 IPC. Trial Court held that only some of the accused persons were responsible for the act. Assault by one accused was an individual act and he was guilty of offence punishable u/s. 304 Part II IPC; that the other two accused were liable to be convicted for offences punishable u/ss. 452 and 323 r/w Section 34 IPC; and that since the total number of persons proved to have committed the offences was only three, provisions of Section 149 were not attracted. Rest of the accused were acquitted. Application of the State in terms of Section 378 Cr.P.C. was dismissed by High Court without giving any reasons thereto. Hence the present appeal by the State *inter alia* questioning the manner of disposal of the application by the High Court.

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Partly allowing the appeal, the Court

**HELD:** 1. The trial Court was required to carefully appraise the entire evidence and then come to a conclusion. If the trial Court was at lapse in this regard the High Court was obliged to undertake such an

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exercise by entertaining the appeal. The trial Court on the facts of this case did not perform its duties, as was enjoined on it by law. High Court ought to have in such circumstances granted leave and thereafter as a first court of appeal, re-appreciated the entire evidence on the record independently and returned its findings objectively as regards guilt or otherwise of the accused. It has failed to do so. The questions involved were not trivial. The question regarding application of Sections 302 and 149 IPC as raised does require consideration, keeping in view the evidence adduced and conclusions of trial Court. [1115-H; 1116-A-B]

2.1. Reasons introduce clarity in an order. On plainest consideration of justice, the High Court ought to have set forth its reasons, howsoever brief, in its order, indicative of an application of its mind; all the more when its order is amenable to further avenue of challenge. The absence of reasons has rendered the High Court order not sustainable. [1116-C-D]

2.2. Reason is the heartbeat of every conclusion, and without the same it becomes lifeless. Reasons are live links between the mind of the decision-taker to the controversy in question and the decision or conclusion arrived at. Reasons substitute subjectivity by objectivity. The emphasis on recording reasons is that if the decision reveals the “inscrutable face of the sphinx”, it can, by its silence, render it virtually impossible for the Courts to perform their appellate function or exercise the power of judicial review in adjudging the validity of the decision. Right to reason is an indispensable part of a sound judicial system; reasons at least sufficient to indicate an application of mind to the matter before Court. Another rationale is that the affected party can know why the decision has gone against him. One of the salutary requirements of natural justice is spelling out reasons for the order made; in other words, a speaking out. The “inscrutable face of a sphinx” is ordinarily incongruous with a judicial or quasi-judicial performance. [1116-F-H; 1117-A-C]

*State of U.P. v. Battan and Ors.*, [2001] 10 SCC 607; *State of Maharashtra v. Vithal Rao Pritirao Chawan*, AIR (1982) SC 1215; *Jawahar Lal Singh v. Naresh Singh and Ors.*, [1987] 2 SCC 222 and *Raj Kishore Jha v. State of Bihar and Ors.*, (2003) 7 Supreme 152, relied on.

*Breen v. Amalgamated Engineering Union*, [1971] 1 All E.R. 1148; *Alexander Machinery (Dudley) Ltd. v. Crabtree*, (1974) ICR 120 (NIRC), referred to.

**A** 3. State is granted leave to file the appeal. The High Court shall entertain the appeal and after requisite notice to the respondents hear the appeal and dispose of it in accordance with law, uninfluenced by any observation made in the present appeal.

*State of Punjab v. Bhag Singh*, [2004] 1 SCC 547, relied on.

**B** 4. Judicial discipline to abide by declaration of law by this Court, cannot be forsaken, under any pretext by any authority or Court, be it even the highest Court in a State, oblivious to Article 141 of the Constitution of India, 1950.

**C** CRIMINAL APPELLATE JURISDICTION : Criminal Appeal No. 234 of 2005.

From the Judgment and Order dated 22.1.2002 of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in Crl. M.No. 493-MA of 2001.

**D** D.P. Singh, Vinay Kumar Garg and Ms. Avneet Toor for the Appellant.

Manoj Swarup, J.P. Dhanda, Mrs. Raj Rani Dhanda and Vineet Dhanda for the Respondents.

**E** The Judgment of the Court was delivered by

**ARIJIT PASAYAT, J.** Leave granted.

**F** The State of Haryana questions legality of the order passed by the Division Bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court dismissing its application under Section 378(3) of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (in short the 'Code').

**G** Respondents faced trial for alleged commission of the offences punishable under Sections 148, 302, 452, 506, 323 read with Section 149 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (in short the 'IPC'). The accusations against the accused persons were that they formed an unlawful assembly and being members of such unlawful assembly, they trespassed into the house of one Dalel Singh (hereinafter referred to as the 'deceased') and inflicted injuries on him and his son Nafe Singh (PW-5) by deadly weapons which they were carrying. The date and time of occurrence was stated to be 23.2.1999 at about 6.00 a.m. There were two eyewitnesses to the occurrence namely Parma

**H** Nand (PW-4), the informant and Nafe Singh, the injured (PW-5). Accused

persons took the plea of false implication and attributed assaults on the accused persons by the deceased and Nefa Singh (PW-5). Three witnesses were examined to further the defence version of false implication.

The trial Court found the evidence of witnesses to be credible and cogent and found that some of the accused persons were responsible for the injuries on the deceased and the injured PW-5. It held that some of the accused persons did not inflict any injury and the assault made by accused Ram Chander was an individual act and the other two accused persons, namely, Ram Pal and Palla Ram were to be convicted for offence punishable under Sections 452 and 323 read with Section 34 IPC. It was held that since the total number of persons proved to have committed the offences was only three, provisions of Section 149 were not attracted. Ultimately, accused Ram Chander was found guilty of offence punishable under Section 304 Part II IPC and other two accused persons named above for the offences punishable under Sections 452 and 323 read with Section 34 IPC. Other accused persons were acquitted of the charges.

The State of Haryana filed an application in terms of Section 378(3) of the Code taking the stand that for attracting Section 149 IPC it is not necessary to attribute any particular overt act. Further, merely because the accused Ram Chander had assaulted by the blunt side of the Gandasa, it cannot mean that he did not have the requisite intention to commit the offence of murder. The trial Court having noticed that the blow was given with such great force that it caused multiple fractures and laceration of the brain, the alteration of the conviction from Section 302 IPC to Section 304 Part II was not correct.

The High Court dismissed the application with the following order :

“We find no good ground to interfere with the reasoned judgment of the trial Court. Dismissed.”

Learned counsel for the appellant-State submitted that the manner of disposal of the application as done by the High Court is unsustainable.

In response, learned counsel for the accused persons submitted that the High Court was justified in not interfering with the elaborate judgment of the trial Court, by refusing grant of leave.

The trial Court was required to carefully appraise the entire evidence and then come to a conclusion. If the trial Court was at lapse in this regard

A the High Court was obliged to undertake such an exercise by entertaining the appeal. The trial Court on the facts of this case did not perform its duties, as was enjoined on it by law. The High Court ought to have in such circumstances granted leave and thereafter as a first court of appeal, re-appreciated the entire evidence on the record independently and returned its findings objectively as regards guilt or otherwise of the accused. It has failed to do so.

B The questions involved were not trivial. The question regarding application of Sections 302 and 149 IPC as raised does require consideration, keeping in view the evidence adduced and conclusions of trial Court. The High Court has not given any reasons for refusing to grant leave to file appeal against acquittal, and seems to have been completely oblivious to the fact that by

C such refusal, a close scrutiny of the order of acquittal, by the appellate forum, has been lost once and for all. The manner in which appeal against acquittal has been dealt with by the High Court leaves much to be desired. Reasons introduce clarity in an order. On plainest consideration of justice, the High Court ought to have set forth its reasons, howsoever brief, in its order, indicative of an application of its mind; all the more when its order is amenable

D to further avenue of challenge. The absence of reasons has rendered the High Court order not sustainable. Similar view has been expressed in *State of U.P. v. Battan and Ors.*, [2001] 10 SCC 607. About two decades back in *State of Maharashtra v. Vithal Rao Pritirao Chawan*, AIR (1982) SC 1215 the desirability of a speaking order while dealing with an application for grant

E of leave was highlighted. The requirement of indicating reasons in such cases has been judicially recognized as imperative. The view was re-iterated in *Jawahar Lal Singh v. Naresh Singh and Ors.*, [1987] 2 SCC 222. Judicial discipline to abide by declaration of law by this Court, cannot be forsaken, under any pretext by any authority or Court, be it even the highest Court in a State, oblivious to Article 141 of the Constitution of India, 1950 (in short the 'Constitution').

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Reason is the heartbeat of every conclusion, and without the same it becomes lifeless. (See *Raj Kishore Jha v. State of Bihar and Ors.*, (2003) 7 Supreme 152).

G Even in respect of administrative orders Lord Denning M.R. in *Breen v. Amalgamated Engineering Union*, [1971] 1 All E.R. 1148 observed "The giving of reasons is one of the fundamentals of good administration". In *Alexander Machinery (Dudley) Ltd. v. Crabtree*, (1974) ICR 120 NIRC it was observed : "Failure to give reasons amounts to denial of justice". Reasons

H are live links between the mind of the decision-taker to the controversy in

question and the decision or conclusion arrived at". Reasons substitute subjectivity by objectivity. The emphasis on recording reasons is that if the decision reveals the "inscrutable face of the sphinx", it can, by its silence, render it virtually impossible for the Courts to perform their appellate function or exercise the power of judicial review in adjudging the validity of the decision. Right to reason is an indispensable part of a sound judicial system; reasons at least sufficient to indicate an application of mind to the matter before Court. Another rationale is that the affected party can know why the decision has gone against him. One of the salutary requirements of natural justice is spelling out reasons for the order made; in other words, a speaking out. The "inscrutable face of a sphinx" is ordinarily incongruous with a judicial or quasi-judicial performance.

The above position was highlighted in *State of Punjab v. Bhag Singh*, [2004] 1 SCC 547.

In view of the aforesaid legal position, the impugned judgment of the High Court is unsustainable and is set aside. We grant leave to the State to file the appeal. The High Court shall entertain the appeal and after requisite notice to the respondents hear the appeal and dispose of it in accordance with law, uninfluenced by any observation made in the present appeal. The appeal is allowed to the extent indicated.

K.K.T.

Appeal partly allowed.