



**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH.**

CACP No. 27 of 2024 (O&M)
in COCP No. 1934 of 2024
in CWP No. 23933 of 2014
Reserved on: 28.11.2024
Pronounced on: 16.1.2025

Rajeev Ranjan and others

.....Appellants

Versus

Neha Gupta and another

....Respondents

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SURESHWAR THAKUR
HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE SUDEEPTI SHARMA

Argued by: Mr. Ankur Mittal, Addl. A.G., Haryana with
Mr. Pardeep Prakash Chahar, Sr. DAG, Haryana and
Mr. Saurabh Mago, DAG, Haryana
for the appellants.

Respondent No. 1 proceeded against ex parte.

Mr. Harmeet Singh Oberoi, Advocate
for respondent No. 2.

SURESHWAR THAKUR, J.

1. The instant appeal has been directed against the order dated 29.10.2024, as passed by the learned Contempt Bench of this Court in COCP No. 1934 of 2024.

Brief facts of the case.

2. The husband of respondent No. 1 was initially appointed on 26.2.1984 as Labour Officer in Haryana State Minor Irrigation Tubewell and worked with the said department till its closure in the year 2003. Subsequently, in view of policy dated 21.6.2006, he was vide appointment letter dated 12.8.2008, thus appointed as Labour Officer-

cum-Conciliation Officer in the Labour Department, Haryana, and,



became posted at Karnal. However, unfortunately the husband of respondent No. 1 met with a fatal accident on 1.11.2008, thus leaving behind his wife (respondent No. 1), a son, a minor daughter and parents as his legal heirs.

3. Respondent No. 1 submitted her case for monthly financial assistance. Since the said amount was not released to her, therefore respondent No. 1 made various representations to the department concerned. Vide letter dated 26.3.2012, issued by the department concerned, respondent No. 1 was informed that she was not entitled to family pension as the service of her husband was less than one year in the department concerned.

4. Respondent No. 1 herein instituted CWP No. 23933 of 2014 before this Court challenging the letter (supra), with a further prayer therein, for issuance of directions to the authorities concerned, to grant her family pension as per the provisions of Family Pension Scheme, 1964 and release the monthly financial assistance under Rule 3 of the Haryana Compassionate Assistance to the Dependents of Deceased Government Employees Rules, 2006. Vide order dated 12.4.2016, the said petition was allowed by this Court. The operative part of the order (supra) becomes extracted hereinafter.

“Applying the ratio of the above mentioned judgments, the writ petition is allowed and a direction is given to the respondents to give the family pension to the petitioner, as per Family pension Scheme, 1964 and further release the financial assistance as per Rule 3 of Rules 2006. This exercise shall be completed within a period of three months from the date of receipt of certified copy of this order.”



5. The appellant-department filed RA-CW No. 342 of 2018 seeking review of the order (supra), which became dismissed on 13.1.2020.

6. The appellants filed LPA No 1 of 2021 challenging the order dated 12.4.2016 passed by the learned Single Judge concerned, which is pending adjudication.

7. Since the order dated 12.4.2016 remained purportedly uncomplied, thereby respondent No. 1 herein preferred COCP No. 2922 of 2022, before this Court, with a prayer therein to initiate contempt proceedings against the contemnors concerned, thus on account of the appellants herein purportedly wilfully disobeying the order (supra) passed by this Court. It has been further alleged therein, that even after the passing of the order dated 12.4.2016, the respondents concerned have not complied with the directions of this Court, which amounts to wilful disobedience on their part.

8. Since in compliance of the order dated 12.4.2016, the appellants had filed compliance affidavit dated 12.1.2024, wherein it was stated that financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 18,31,632/- had already been paid and that since qua disbursement of the family pension to the respondent, rather the matter had been referred to Accountant General, Haryana. Therefore, vide order dated 12.1.2024, made by the learned Contempt Bench concerned, the contempt petition bearing COCP No. 2922 of 2018 was dismissed. The relevant portions of the said order become extracted hereinafter.

“Pursuant to previous order dated 22.11.2023, Mr. Rajiv Ranjan, Principal Secretary to Government of Haryana,



Labour Department is present in the Court and filed compliance report by way of his affidavit. The same is taken on record. Learned counsel for the respondents has submitted that the financial assistance has already been paid to the petitioner and qua the family pension, the matter has been referred to Accountant General, Haryana for further compliance, subject to decision in LPA-1-2021

In view of the above, this Court does not find any ground to continue with the present petition any more.

Dismissed.

However, if any grievance of the petitioner is left un-addressed, she would be at liberty to raise the same in any alternate remedy, but in accordance with law. ”

9. Respondent No. 1 again filed the instant COCP No. 1934 of 2024 before this Court, with a prayer therein to initiate contempt proceedings against the contemnors concerned, thus on account of the appellants herein purportedly wilfully disobeying the order dated 12.4.2016, inasmuch as the family pension becoming not released to her.

10. The learned Contempt Court concerned, vide order dated 29.10.2024, passed the hereinafter order upon the COCP (supra).

“Learned counsel for respondent Nos. 2 to 4, on instructions from Mr. Rakesh Gupta, Assistant, prays for two weeks’ more time for compliance with respect to the remaining payment towards interest to the petitioner for the delayed disbursement of benefits.

List on 19.11.2024.

It is made clear that in case the needful is not done, the officer(s) concerned shall remain present in Court on the date fixed and would be liable to pay litigation costs to the petitioner to the tune of Rs. 50,000/- from his / her own pocket. ”

11. The order (supra), passed by the learned Single Judge (Contempt Court) has caused pain to the appellants herein and has led them to file thereagainst the instant appeal before this Court.



Submissions of the learned counsels for the appellants

12. The learned counsels for the appellants have argued before this Court that the Hon'ble Contempt Bench rather has exceeded its jurisdiction by imposing costs of Rs. 50,000/- that too, on the first date of hearing of the contempt petition. They further submit that the order imposing costs of Rs. 50,000/- is incidental to and/or is inextricably connected with an order qua the imposition of fine of Rs. 2,000/- as mandated in Section 12 of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971. Therefore, it is argued, that the said imposed fine amount, that too at the very threshold of the contempt petition, thus tantamounts to the imposition of punishment, upon the present appellants. Resultantly, it is argued, that as such, the instant appeal is maintainable before this Court, and, that the impugned order dated 29.10.2024, as passed by the learned Single Judge, be quashed and set aside.

13. Reiteratedly, the learned counsels contend, with much vigour before this Court, that when as such the impugned order is proclived towards imposing punishment upon the contemnors, and, that too, without asking from the appellants rather a well reasoned explanation qua therebys compliance theretos thus wanting. Therefore, it is further argued, that since the appellants may have a permissible valid defence rather for accounting for the delay, if any, in the making of compliance to the order (supra), besides it is also contended that even if the order (supra) embodied a clear obeyable mandamus, therebys too, some opportunity may have been granted to the appellants to mete compliance thereto. However, since neither any explanation has been



asked to be furnished by the learned Contempt Court, from the appellants rather for the delay, if any, in the makings of compliance to the supra order, nor when any opportunity, if required for seeking extension of time for making compliance thereto, thus became granted. Consequently, it is argued that in a most slipshod and arbitrary manner, the learned Contempt Court, has proceeded to make the order (supra), which as stated supra, is proclived towards imposing punishment, upon the present appellants, besides therebys it intends to, without making the requisite discernments from the records, rather create a right in the respondent to seek enforcement of the order (supra), despite may be it not being complyable at all.

14. In nutshell, the learned counsels for the appellants have argued, that therebys the instant case is covered within the domain of principle No. IV of the verdict made by Hon'ble Apex Court, in case titled as "Midnapore Peoples' Coop. Bank Ltd. And others V. Chunilal Nanda and others" reported in (2006) 5 SCC 399. The said principle is extracted hereinafter.

IV. Any direction issued or decision made by the High Court on the merits of a dispute between the parties, will not be in the exercise of 'jurisdiction to punish for contempt' and therefore, not appealable under section 19 of CC Act. The only exception is where such direction or decision is incidental to or inextricably connected with the order punishing for contempt, in which event the appeal under section 19 of the Act, can also encompass the incidental or inextricably connected directions.

15. In addition, the learned counsels for the appellants have argued, that the instant case is not covered within the domain of principle No. V of the judgment (supra), as at the outset, the learned



Contempt Court, did not decide any issue, nor made any direction relating to the merits of the dispute, wherebys alone the said decision was open to a challenge in an intra-court appeal, than in an appeal filed within the domain of principle No. IV.

16. The reason which the learned counsel for the appellants, thus assigns for making the above submission, is grooved in the factum that, since the pleadings were not complete at the stage of making of the order (supra). Therefore, only when the pleadings are complete, whereafters upon making well informed discernments of the pleadings, thus when subsequently a well informed decision or direction becomes passed, rather covering the merits of the dispute emerging amongst the parties, thereupon alone the impugned directions may have been covered within the ambit of principle No. V, as enclosed in **Midnapore Peoples' Coop. Bank Ltd.**'s case (supra). Consequently, the learned counsels submit, that the instant case is not covered within the ambit of principle No. V, as enclosed in the judgment (supra) rendered by the Apex Court, rather the instant case is covered within the ambit of principle No. IV of the judgment (supra).

Inferences of this Court

17. In Section 19 of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, (hereinafter referred to as 'the Act of 1971') provisions whereof becomes extracted hereinafter, it becomes mandated, that an appeal against an order passed by the Contempt Bench concerned, is maintainable, but yet only against such an order or a decision, as becomes made by the Contempt Bench concerned, wherebys



punishment for contempt becomes recorded.

“19. Appeals.—(1) An appeal shall lie as of right from any order or decision of the High Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction “to punish for contempt”—

(a) where the order or decision is that of a single judge, to a Bench of not less than two judges of the Court;

(b) where the order or decision is that of a Bench, to the Supreme Court:

Provided that where the order or decision is that of the Court of the Judicial Commissioner in any Union territory, such appeal shall lie to the Supreme Court.

(2) Pending any appeal, the appellate Court may order that—

(a) the execution of the punishment or order appealed against be suspended;

(b) if the appellant is in confinement, he be released on bail; and

(c) the appeal be heard notwithstanding that the appellant has not purged his contempt.

(3) Where any person aggrieved by any order against which an appeal may be filed satisfies the High Court that he intends to prefer an appeal, the High Court may also exercise all or any of the powers conferred by sub-section (2).

(4) An appeal under sub-section (1) shall be filed—

(a) in the case of an appeal to a Bench of the High Court, within thirty days;

(b) in the case of an appeal to the Supreme Court, within sixty days, from the date of the order appealed against.”

18. Before proceeding to determine the validity of the making of the impugned order, it is necessary to initially extract the apposite regulatory guidelines, as become underlined in the judgment rendered by the Apex Court in case titled as ***Modern Food Industries (India) Ltd and another versus Sachidanand Dass and another*** reported in ***1995 Supp (4) Supreme Court Cases 465***. The relevant paragraphs of the judgments (supra) become extracted hereinafter.

“2. The learned single Judge of the High Court by his order dated 10.1.1992 quashed the order of termination of



the services of the first respondent, by the appellants and directed his reinstatement and payment of back-salary. Appellants preferred an appeal to the Division Bench and also sought a stay, pending appeal, of the operation of the learned single Judge's order. The Division Bench did not take up the appeal for admission nor considered the prayer for interlocutory stay. In the meanwhile, on the allegation that the learned single Judge's order had not been obeyed, the first respondent moved for initiation of proceedings for contempt against the appellants pursuant to which the High Court directed the Chairman of the first appellant to appear in person so that the complaint of contempt be proceeded with.

*3. Before the High Court, appellants urged that before any contempt proceedings could be initiated, it was necessary and appropriate for the Division Bench to examine the prayer for stay, or else, the appeal itself might become infructuous. This did not commend itself to the High Court which sought to proceed with the contempt first. We are afraid, the course adopted by the High Court does not commend itself as proper. If, without considering the prayer for stay, obedience to the Single Judge's order was insisted upon at the pain of committal for contempt, the appellants may find, as has now happened, the very purpose of appeal and the prayer for interlocutory stay infructuous. It is true that a mere filing of an appeal and an application for stay do not by themselves absolve the appellants from obeying the order under appeal and that any compliance with the learned single Judge's order would be subject to the final result of the appeal. But then the changes brought about in the interregnum in obedience of the order under appeal might themselves be a cause and source of prejudice. Wherever the order whose disobedience is complained about is appealed against and stay of its operation is pending before the Court, it will be appropriate to take up for consideration the prayer for stay either earlier or at least simultaneously with the complaint for contempt. To keep the prayer for stay stand-by and to insist upon proceeding with the complaint for contempt might in many conceivable cases, as here, cause serious prejudice, this is the view taken in **State of J. and K. v. Mohammad Yaqoob Khan, (1992) 4 SCC 167.***

19. It has been forthrightly stated in the verdict (supra) that the contempt action has to be sparingly drawn, and, is to be avoided to be



drawn, as a measure to coerce the purported errant litigant to make compliances with certain directions or orders, especially when the relief granted by the writ Court becomes appealed against, whereupon the outcome of the availed remedy by the purported errant litigant rather is prima facie required to be awaited. Moreover, therein also occurs a trite underscoring to the effect, that the action for contempt has to become quartered within the tritely settled contours, inasmuch as, immense care and caution is required to be exercised by the Contempt Court, as ultimately the objective of rearing of an able contempt petition, thus is to ensure the maintaining of the majesty, and, dignity of self speaking binding orders/directions passed by the Courts of law.

20. Furthermore, the Apex Court in a judgment rendered in case titled as ***State of J and K versus Mohd. Yaqoob Khan and others*** reported in ***(1992) 4 Supreme Court Cases 167*** has held as under:-

6. *We do not agree. The scope of a contempt proceeding is very different from that of the pending main case yet to be heard and disposed of (in future). Besides, the respondents in a pending case are at a disadvantage if they are called upon to meet the merits of the claim in a contempt proceeding at the risk of being punished. It is, therefore, not right to suggest that it should be assumed that the initial order of stay got confirmed by the subsequent orders passed in the contempt matter.*

7. *We, therefore, hold that the High Court should have first taken up the stay matter without any threat to the respondents in the writ case of being punished for contempt. Only after disposing it of, the other case should have been taken up. It is further significant to note that the respondents before the High Court were raising a serious objection disputing the claim of the writ petitioner. Therefore, an order in the nature of mandatory direction could not have been justified unless the*



court was in a position to consider the objections and record a finding, prima facie in nature, in favour of the writ petitioner. Besides challenging the claim on merits, the respondent was entitled to raise a plea of non-maintainability of a writ application filed for the purpose of executing a decree. It appears that at an earlier stage the decree in question was actually put in execution when the parties are said to have entered into a compromise. According to the case of the State the entire liability under the decree (read with the compromise) has already been discharged. The dispute, therefore, will be covered by Section 47 of the Civil Procedure Code. It will be a serious question to consider whether in these circumstances the writ petitioner was entitled to maintain his application under Article 226 of the Constitution at all. We do not want to decide any of these controversies between the parties at this stage except holding that the orders passed in the contempt proceeding were not justified, being premature, and must, therefore, be entirely ignored. The High Court should first take up the stay matter in the writ case, and dispose it of by an appropriate order. Only thereafter it shall proceed to consider whether the State and its authorities could be accused of being guilty of having committed contempt of court.”

21. The further entwined therewith issue, which is required to be also decided is whether the Contempt Court, can substitute itself into an Executing Court, and, that too when an appeal against the relevant order/direction is subjudice. In the above regard, the Apex Court in case titled as ***R.N.Dey versus Bhagyabati Pramanik and others*** reported in **(2000) 4 Supreme Court Cases 400**, has held as under:-

“7. We may reiterate that weapon of contempt is not to be used in abundance or misused. Normally, it cannot be used for execution of the decree or implementation of an order for which alternative remedy in law is provided for. Discretion given to the Court is to be exercised for maintenance of Court's dignity and majesty of law. Further, an aggrieved party has no



right to insist that Court should exercise such jurisdiction as contempt is between a contemnor and the Court. It is true that in the present case, the High Court has kept the matter pending and has ordered that it should be heard along with the First Appeal. But, at the same time, it is to be noticed that under the coercion of contempt proceeding, appellants cannot be directed to pay the compensation amount which they are disputing by asserting that claimants were not the owners of the property in question and that decree was obtained by suppressing the material fact and by fraud. Even presuming that claimants are entitled to recover the amount of compensation as awarded by the trial Court as no stay order is granted by the High Court, at the most they are entitled to recover the same by executing the said award wherein the State can or may contend that the award is nullity. In such a situation, as there was no wilful or deliberate disobedience of the order, the initiation of contempt proceedings was wholly unjustified.”

22. The further entwined therewith issue, which is required to become also adjudicated, is that, whether the Contempt Court can grant substantive relief, despite the same not being covered by the order/judgment, besides especially when the apposite order/judgment rather evidently is the subject matter of the corrective/remedial judicial proceedings. In the above regard, the relevant guidelines become embodied in the judgment rendered by the Apex Court in case titled as ***Sudhir Vasudeva, Chairman and Managing Director, Oil and natural Gas Corporate Limited and others versus M. George Ravishekaran and others*** reported in ***(2014) 3 Supreme Court Cases 373***. The relevant paragraph of the judgment (supra) becomes extracted hereinafter

“19. The power vested in the High Courts as well as this Court to punish for contempt is a special and rare power



available both under the Constitution as well as the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971. It is a drastic power which, if misdirected, could even curb the liberty of the individual charged with commission of contempt. The very nature of the power casts a sacred duty in the Courts to exercise the same with the greatest of care and caution. This is also necessary as, more often than not, adjudication of a contempt plea involves a process of self determination of the sweep, meaning and effect of the order in respect of which disobedience is alleged. Courts must not, therefore, travel beyond the four corners of the order which is alleged to have been flouted or enter into questions that have not been dealt with or decided in the judgment or the order violation of which is alleged. Only such directions which are explicit in a judgment or order or are plainly self evident ought to be taken into account for the purpose of consideration as to whether there has been any disobedience or willful violation of the same. Decided issues cannot be reopened; nor the plea of equities can be considered. Courts must also ensure that while considering a contempt plea the power available to the Court in other corrective jurisdictions like review or appeal is not trenched upon. No order or direction supplemental to what has been already expressed should be issued by the Court while exercising jurisdiction in the domain of the contempt law; such an exercise is more appropriate in other jurisdictions vested in the Court, as noticed above. The above principles would appear to be the cumulative outcome of the precedents cited at the bar, namely, Jhareswar Prasad Paul and Another v. Tarak Nath Ganguly and Others, (2002) 5 SCC 352, V.M.Manohar Prasad v. N. Ratnam Raju and Another, (2004) 13 SCC 610, Bihar Finance Service House Construction Cooperative Society Ltd. v Gautam Goswami and others (2008) 3 SCC 339 and Union of India and Others v. Subedar Devassy PV 12 (2006) 1 SCC 613.”

23. Therefore, the maintainability of the instant appeal against the order (supra) made by the learned Contempt Bench, but is required



to be both delved into, besides is required to be adjudicated upon.

24. Be that as it may, this Court is also required to impart a signification to the statutory coinage “jurisdiction to punish for contempt” as occurs in sub-Section (1) of Section 19 of the Act of 1971.

25. The meaning to be imparted to the statutory coinage (supra) is not, that the contemnor has to await the pronouncement of punishment upon him. Contrarily the meaning to be imparted to the statutory coinage (supra), is that, any order or decision recorded by the learned Single Bench of this Court, while exercising contempt jurisdiction, rather manifesting any proclivities towards ultimately punishing the alleged contemnor for contempt. Resultantly thereby the apposite maneuverings (supra), as are also clearly discernible from the making of the apposite order, thus makings the apposite appeal to be maintainable before the Appellate Court.

26. The coinage “to punish for contempt” which exists subsequent to the coinage “any order or decision of the High Court” is an expression, whose effective impact cannot be restricted to the era of ultimate awardings of punishment, as thereby any vitiated order passed during the pendency of the contempt proceedings, despite existence of valid extenuating explications (supra), thus well forbidding the learned Single Benches, from initiating contempt action, besides when for tangible reasons, rather apposite extensions of time are accordable, thus for making compliance(s) with the order alleged to be purportedly disobeyed, but may yet become also ill-countenanced. Resultantly thereby if yet this Court also overlooks the beneficent mitigating



effects of all the possible, thus permissible extenuating pleas, thereupons the said raised possible extenuating pleas, as become earlier arbitrarily rejected by the learned Single Bench of this Court, but would also similarly become arbitrarily rejected even by this Court.

27. Resultantly therebys the learned Single Bench of this Court appears to rather than, as expostulated in verdicts (supra), that contempt jurisdiction is to be sparingly exercised or becoming potentialized only for upholding the majesty, and, dignity of the obeyable directions or the orders passed by the Courts of law, thus through initiating contempt action against the persons concerned, but contrarily rather has whimsically and arbitrarily miskewed the contempt jurisdiction.

28. Ultimately, the preponderant reason, for this Court concluding that the above submission addressed before this Court by the learned counsel for the respondent, as appertains to the maintainability of the present appeal, is required to be rejected, whereas, in this Court declaring that the instant appeal becomes maintainable, thus becomes hinged upon the hereinafter principles, relating to the maintainability of appeals by the Appellate Court concerned, principles whereof, become engrafted in paragraph No.11 of the verdict made by Hon'ble Apex Court, in case titled as "**Midnapore Peoples' Coop. Bank Ltd. And others V. Chunilal Nanda and others**" reported in **(2006) 5 SCC 399**, paragraph whereof becomes extracted hereinafter.

"11. The position emerging from these decisions, in regard to appeals against orders in contempt proceedings may be summarized thus :

I. An appeal under section 19 is maintainable only against an



order or decision of the High Court passed in exercise of its jurisdiction to punish for contempt, that is, an order imposing punishment for contempt.

II. Neither an order declining to initiate proceedings for contempt, nor an order initiating proceedings for contempt nor an order dropping the proceedings for contempt nor an order acquitting or exonerating the contemnor, is appealable under Section 19 of the CC Act. In special circumstances, they may be open to challenge under Article 136 of the Constitution.

III. In a proceeding for contempt, the High Court can decide whether any contempt of court has been committed, and if so, what should be the punishment and matters incidental thereto. In such a proceeding, it is not appropriate to adjudicate or decide any issue relating to the merits of the dispute between the parties.

IV. Any direction issued or decision made by the High Court on the merits of a dispute between the parties, will not be in the exercise of 'jurisdiction to punish for contempt' and therefore, not appealable under section 19 of CC Act. The only exception is where such direction or decision is incidental to or inextricably connected with the order punishing for contempt, in which event the appeal under section 19 of the Act, can also encompass the incidental or inextricably connected directions.

V. If the High Court, for whatsoever reason, decides an issue or makes any direction, relating to the merits of the dispute between the parties, in a contempt proceedings, the aggrieved person is not without remedy. Such an order is open to challenge in an intra-court appeal (if the order was of a learned Single Judge and there is a provision for an intra-court appeal), or by seeking special leave to appeal under Article 136 of the Constitution of India (in other cases).

The first point is answered accordingly."

29. Exceptions to the arguments raised (supra) by the learned counsel for the respondent against the maintainability of the present

appeal, thus become well grooved in principle No. IV, wherein, it is



expounded that any direction or decision which is incidental to or is inextricably connected with the order punishing for contempt, thereby, the said does make the contempt appeal maintainable. Conspicuously also when for all the reasons (supra), the learned Contempt Bench concerned, through the making of the impugned order, has evidently proclived towards punishing the contemnors for contempt, whereby also the instant appeal is maintainable.

30. Moreover also when through the making of the impugned order, the learned Contempt Court of this Court has prohibited the appellants from either asking for extensions of time, if required, besides also has untenably restrained them, thus from purveying justifiable reasons for the order (supra) made by this Court, may be not requiring preemptory compliance, rather may be for the reason that the directions made therein were not well banked upon the precedents referred to therein. Importantly also when an LPA had been filed against the decision (supra) recorded by this Court, whereupon it became enjoined upon the learned Contempt Bench to rather than at the very threshold make the impugned order, thus await the outcome of the LPA (supra).

31. Lastly, the principles of law which are required to hereafter become considered to be applied by the learned Contempt Court, are the ones which are stated in the instant case and also are the ones, as become underlined in the verdict rendered by this Court in **CACP No. 20 of 2024**, titled as ***T.V.S.N. Prasad and others versus Resham Singh***.

32. Furthermore, this Court on 14.11.2024, had passed the



hereinafter extracted order-

“x x x x

Adjourned to 27.11.2024.

In the meantime, and till further orders, the operation of the impugned order dated 29.10.2024 shall remain stayed.”

33. However, despite this Court making the hereinabove extracted order, the learned Contempt Bench of this Court proceeded to make the hereinafter extracted order on 24.11.2024.

“x x x x

Just to straighten the records, the undertaking with respect to the remaining payment towards interest on the delayed disbursal of benefits payable to the petitioner was made by the respondents themselves of their own volition, based on instructions from their own officials and no application whatsoever was filed on their behalf about seeking withdrawal of the undertaking extended on 29.10.2024, which was apparently made in view of the decision rendered by the Hon’ble Apex Court in case of “Bal Kishore Mody Vs. Arun Kumar Singh” reported as, (2001) 10 SCC 174, whereby the respondents could be made liable to pay interest on the delayed payment of the retiral benefits from the date it became due till the date of actual payment.

x x x x”

34. It is but trite, and, clear that when this Court had till further orders stayed the operation of the impugned order, therebys but necessarily, the learned Contempt Bench of this Court but was concomitantly restrained from drawing further proceedings. However, the learned Contempt Bench of this Court in making the above extracted order, and, that too during the pendency of the instant contempt appeal before this Court, has done so on a sheer misreading of the order (supra) wherebys upon the operation of the impugned order became stayed, whereupon but concomitantly the further proceedings were also required to be not undertaken by the learned Contempt Bench concerned. The said misreading has also further breached the supra



expostulated principle, that until the LPA Bench, thus pronouncing the apposite verdict on the validity of the challenge made to the supra operative portion of the order recorded by the Writ Court concerned, thus thereupto no proceedings for contempt are drawable against the alleged contemnors. Resultantly therebys through the supra made order thus during the pendency of the LPA, has resulted in the learned Contempt Bench concerened, assuming onto itself the jurisdiction of the LPA Bench.

35. Furthermore, it also appears that though the judgment of the Apex Court in case titled as ***Bal Kishore Mody versus Arun Kumar Singh*** reported in ***(2001) 10 SCC 174***, rendered in the above extracted part of the order rendered by the learned Contempt Bench on 19.11.2024, became precedent for the renderings of the supra extracted order by the Writ Court concerned, but when a challenge to the said operative part is made by the present appellants, therebys the applicability or non-applicability of the said precedent to the facts at hand, was to be done only by the LPA Bench, and, was not to be done by the learned Contempt Bench. Since the learned Contempt Bench of this Court, has thereby assumed the jurisdiction of an LPA Bench, therebys the said assumption of jurisdiction, is an ill assumed jurisdiction, whereupons, the learned Contempt Bench has proceeded to execute the verdict (supra), whereby, it has substituted itself as an Executing Court, which it could do but only after the supra extracted verdict made upon writ petition (supra) becoming affirmed by the LPA Bench, but after the LPA Bench dismissing the LPA, as raised thereagainst before it.



36. Despite repeated insistences being made upon the learned Contempt Bench of this Court to comply with the supra principles, yet the learned Contempt Bench of this Court has repeatedly failed to do so. Therefore, the learned Contempt Bench of this Court is directed to ensure that hereafter strict compliances become made to the supra principles, rather than in a slipshod and arbitrary manner, thus orders alike the ones which are impugned before this Court, thus becoming passed.

37. Conspicuously also when the present appeal is but a continuation of the apposite contempt petition, therefore, this Court alone held the competent jurisdiction to decide both the contempt petition as well as the appeal as has arisen therefrom.

38. Last but not the least in terms of the provisions of Section 23 of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, provisions whereof become extracted hereinafter, whereby the procedures for regulating the exercise of contempt jurisdiction becomes permitted to be created by the High Court, thus this High Court has formulated the relevant procedural rules which become nomenclatured as the Contempt of Court (Punjab and Haryana) Rules, 1974 (for short '*the Rules of 1974*').

“23. Power of Supreme Court and High Courts to make rules.

—
The Supreme Court or, as the case may be, any High Court, may make rules, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, providing for any matter relating to its procedure.”

39. The relevant provisions which are of striking importance in the instant case become embodied in Rules 9, 10 and 11 of the Rules of 1974, rules whereof become extracted hereinafter.



referred to in section 14, the High Court may take action

- (a) on its own motion; or*
- (b) on a petition presented by the party aggrieved; or*
- (c) in the case of any civil contempt of a subordinate court, on reference made to it by that Court.*

10. (1) In the case of civil contempt, other than a contempt referred to in section 14, the person charged may file his affidavit by way of reply to the charge and shall serve a copy thereof on the petitioner on his counsel at least seven days before the date of hearing.

(2) No further return, affidavit or document shall be filed except with the leave of the High Court.

11. In the case of a civil contempt, the High Court may determine the matter of charge either on affidavits filed or on such further evidence as may be taken by itself or recorded by a subordinate court in pursuance of a direction made by it, and pass such order as the justice of the case requires, having regard to the provisions of sections 12 and 13 of the Act.”

40. Importantly it is stated in Rule 10 of the Rules of 1974 that when proceedings qua commission of any purported civil contempt, other than a contempt referred to in Section 14, thus become launched, therebys the person charged is required to file an affidavit by way of reply to the charge.

41. As such, the underpinnings which generate therefrom are that the successful trial of the formulated charge appertaining to the commission of any alleged civil contempt, thus is to be made, only after satisfaction becoming drawn by the learned Contempt Bench, that the person so charged but makes a feeble and weak plea in his reply on affidavit, rather for justifying the purported contumacy, as become allegedly committed by him. Resultantly therebys, since at the very threshold the learned Contempt Bench, even without framing a charge appertaining to the alleged commission of civil contempt, and, also subsequently without proceeding to consider the justifiable extenuating cause, as would become echoed in the reply on affidavit, wherebys the



contemnor may be amenable for being discharged, rather reiteratedly has proceeded to conclude that civil contempt has been committed. Resultantly, in terms of the supra rules formulated by the High Court, the learned Contempt Bench of this Court but has, at the very threshold rather derogated from the supra stated established procedure, thus in its recording a finding, that the present appellants indulged in contumacious conduct.

Final order

42. Hence, there is merit in the instant appeal and the same is allowed, and the impugned order dated 29.10.2024, as becomes drawn by learned Single Bench is quashed, and, set aside, and, the present appellants are discharged accordingly.

43. The miscellaneous application(s), if any, is/are also disposed of.

44. A copy of this order be forthwith sent to the learned Contempt Bench concerned, for subsequently complete adherence being made to the above expostulated principles of law, and, it is expected that hereafter the supra norms of propriety and judicial decorum remain uneroded.

(SURESHWAR THAKUR)
JUDGE

(SUDEEPTI SHARMA)
JUDGE

January 16th, 2025
Gurpreet

Whether speaking/reasoned : Yes/No
Whether reportable : Yes/No