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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

+ CONT.CAS(C) 748/2014

PRAVEEN ARYA

..... Petitioner

Through: Mr. Puneet Goel, Advocate with
Ms. Meenu Juneja, Advocate.

versus

PADMINI SINGLA AND ORS

..... Respondents

Through: Mr Sushil Dutt Salwan, Advocate.

% Date of Decision : 11th August, 2015

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE MANMOHAN

J U D G M E N T

MANMOHAN, J: (Oral)

1. Present contempt petition has been filed alleging wilful breach of direction and undertaking given by the respondents in the order dated 25th July, 2014 in W.P.(C) 5344/2013.
2. It is pertinent to mention that the order dated 25th July, 2014 was passed upon a second application being filed by the petitioner in a disposed of writ petition. In the application which was disposed of vide order dated 25th July, 2014 the petitioner had prayed for a direction to respondent No.3 to ensure implementation of the order dated 25th November, 2013 passed in pursuance to the order disposing of the writ petition whereunder respondents No.5 and 6 i.e. the School was directed to comply with the provisions under Section 10(1) of Delhi School Education Act, 1973 (for short 'DSEA, 1973') in respect of the petitioner and other employees of the school.

3. The said application was disposed of upon a submission made by the counsel for the Director of Education that a notice dated 23rd July, 2014 had been issued calling upon the school to report compliance under Section 10(1) of the DSEA, 1973 failing which, it was warned that Department would take appropriate action as envisaged under provisions of the DSEA, 1973.

4. Consequently, this Court vide order dated 25th July, 2014 directed the Director of Education to ensure that in case of non-compliance of its directions to the respondents No.5 and 6, appropriate action is taken against the school as envisaged under the Act.

5. Learned counsel for petitioner has referred to Section 10 of the DSEA, 1973 and stated that as the directions issued by the Director of Education under Section 10 had not been complied with, the Management of the School should have been taken over by the Director of Education under Section 20 and an inspection of the school under Section 24 of the DSEA, 1973 should have been ordered.

6. According to him, as the management of the school had not been taken over and inspection had not been ordered, the respondents were guilty of contempt.

7. Today, Mr. Sushil Dutt Salwarn, learned counsel for respondent- Director of Education, has handed over an order dated 06th August, 2015 by virtue of which the Managing Committee of the School in question has been directed to comply with the following directions:-

- i. To pay the DA as per Govt. prevailing rates, if any left out.*
- ii. To pay bonus to Sh. Parveen Arya as per his entitlement after examining his claim as made above subject to scrutiny and verification of his record w.e.f. 1996-97.*
- iii. To consider the case of Sh. Parveen Arya for grant of ACP in view of the observation made above.*
- iv. To make payment of the balance amount of the arrear of 6th CPC, after verification.*

- v. *To review his pay fixation since initial appointment as LDC in the school i.e. 01.09.1991 giving him up-to-date due increment benefits as per prevailing pay fixation norms as it has been found that he was wrongly paid an increment of Rs.255/- after 2 months of his joining on the post LDC instead of 12 months qualifying service.”*

8. The order dated 06th August, 2015 is taken on record.

9. Upon a perusal of the orders dated 27th August, 2013, 28th April, 2014 and 25th July, 2014 passed in W.P.(C) 5344/2013, this Court is of the view that no wilful disobedience of the aforesaid orders has been made out. In none of the orders, the Director of Education had been directed to take over management of the school or to order inspection of the school. The discretion to take action under Sections 20 and 24 of the DSEA, 1973 is vested with the Director of Education and the only direction that has been given by the Court to the Director of Education in the aforesaid orders was to take appropriate action. The Director of Education in its wisdom has decided to issue an office order dated 06th August, 2015 directing the Managing Committee of the school to make certain amounts. Consequently, it cannot be said that the said order dated 06th August, 2015 constitutes contempt of any of the orders passed by this Court.

10. In any event, it is settled law that a person can be held guilty of contempt only if he has wilfully disobeyed any judgment, order or direction. Though the term ‘wilful’ has not been defined, the Supreme Court has, in number of judgments, explained its meaning. In ***All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam vs. L.K. Tripathi and Ors., (2009) 5 SCC 417*** the Supreme Court has held as under:-

“54. An analysis of Section 2(b) of the 1971 Act shows that wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process of a court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to a court constitutes civil contempt. If this definition is read with Article 129 of the Constitution of India, it

becomes clear that being a court of record, this Court can punish a person for civil contempt if it is found that he has wilfully disobeyed any judgment, etc. or violated an undertaking given to the Court.

55. The term “wilful” (willfull) has not been defined in the 1971 Act. Therefore, it will be useful to notice dictionary meaning of the said term. As per The New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary (1980 Edn.), the term “wilful” means “asserting or disposed to assert one's own will against instruction, persuasion, etc.; obstinately self-willed; deliberate, intentional, showing perversity or self-will”.

56. According to Black's Law Dictionary (8th Edn.)—“Wilful” means “[v]oluntary and intentional, but not necessarily malicious” and “wilfulness” means

“1. The fact or quality of acting purposely or by design; deliberateness; intention; wilfulness does not necessarily imply malice, but it involves more than just knowledge.

2. The voluntary, intentional violation or disregard of a known legal duty.”

57. As per Stroud's Judicial Dictionary, Vol. 5 (4th Edn.), “wilful disobedience” means:

“(1) The wilful disobedience of a SEAMAN or apprentice is ‘wilfully disobeying any lawful command DURING the engagement’: ‘There may be many cases in which DESERTION, or ABSENCE without leave, would not amount to wilful disobedience, and in these cases the seaman would only be liable to the lesser penalty. Where, however, the seaman deserts or is intentionally absent without leave after the time at which he has been lawfully ordered to be on board, his desertion or absence may amount to “wilful disobedience,” and, consequently, that he would be liable to imprisonment. The words “during the engagement” seem to suggest that the contract between the employer and the employed should be taken into account, and that if, having regard to that contract,

the order was one which the employed was bound to obey, his disobedience might be dealt with under clause (d)';"

58. In *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, the term "wilful" has been defined as:

"1. Asserting or disposed to assert one's own will against persuasion, instruction, or command; governed by will without regard to reason; obstinately self-willed or perverse.

2. Willing; consenting; ready to comply with a request, desire, or requirement—1598.

3. Proceeding from the will; done or suffered of one's own free will or choice; voluntary—1687.

4. Done on purpose or wittingly; purposed, deliberate, intentional. (Chiefly, now always, in bad sense of a blameworthy action; freq. implying 'perverse, obstinate'.)"

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62. Para 17 of the judgment which contains discussion on the subject reads as under: (*Dharam Godha* case [(2003) 11 SCC 1], SCC pp. 14-15)

"17. Section 2(b) of the Contempt of Courts Act defines 'civil contempt' and it means wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other process of a court or wilful breach of undertaking given to a court. 'Wilful' means an act or omission which is done voluntarily and intentionally and with the specific intent to do something the law forbids or with the specific intent to fail to do something the law requires to be done, that is to say, with bad purpose either to disobey or to disregard the law. It signifies a deliberate action done with evil intent or with a bad motive or purpose. Therefore, in order to constitute contempt the order of the court must be of such a nature which is capable of execution by the person charged in normal circumstances. It should not require any extraordinary effort nor should be dependent, either wholly or in part, upon any act or omission of a

third party for its compliance. This has to be judged having regard to the facts and circumstances of each case. The facts mentioned above show that none of the respondents to the petition can be held to be directly responsible if the Scheme which had been formulated by the Government of India on 28-6-1996 and had been approved by this Court by the order dated 8-7-1996 could not be implemented in letter and spirit as many factors have contributed to the same. The reasons given for non-inclusion of Shri Umadhar Prasad Singh in signing of the agreement appear to be quite plausible. NCFL has undoubtedly not discharged its liability of making payment of its entire liability of Rs 6 crores. However, it has come out with a case that some additional expenditure has been incurred in running the unit. It is not possible to get the complete financial picture only on the basis of the affidavits filed in the present petition. On the material on record, therefore, it is not possible to hold that the charge of having committed contempt of court on account of alleged non-compliance with the orders passed by this Court on 8-7-1996, 1-5-1997 [Ashok Paper Mills Kamgar Union v. Union of India, (1997) 10 SCC 113] and 31-7-2000 [Ashok Paper Mills Kamgar Union v. Union of India, (2003) 11 SCC 16] has been established against any one of the respondents.”

(emphasis added)

63. *In DDA v. Skipper Construction [(1995) 3 SCC 507] this Court highlighted the distinction between the civil and criminal contempt in the following words: (SCC p. 517, paras 43-44)*

“43. Civil contempt is defined under Section 2(b) of the Act. Thus, any wilful disobedience to the order of the court to do or abstain from doing any act is prima facie a civil contempt. Civil contempt arises where the power of the court is invoked and exercised to enforce obedience to orders of the court.

44. On the contrary, criminal contempts are criminal in nature. It may include outrages on the Judges in open

court, defiant disobedience to the Judges in court, libels on Judges or courts or interfering with the courts of justice or any act which tends to prejudice the courts of justice.”

64. *In Kapildeo Prasad Sah v. State of Bihar [(1999) 7 SCC 569 : 1999 SCC (L&S) 1357]* the Court outlined the object of its contempt jurisdiction in the following words: (SCC pp. 573-74, paras 9 & 11)

“9. For holding the respondents to have committed contempt, civil contempt at that, it has to be shown that there has been wilful disobedience of the judgment or order of the court. Power to punish for contempt is to be resorted to when there is clear violation of the court's order. Since notice of contempt and punishment for contempt is of far-reaching consequence, these powers should be invoked only when a clear case of wilful disobedience of the court's order has been made out. Whether disobedience is wilful in a particular case depends on the facts and circumstances of that case. Judicial orders are to be properly understood and complied with. Even negligence and carelessness can amount to disobedience particularly when the attention of the person is drawn to the court's orders and its implications. Disobedience of the court's order strikes at the very root of the rule of law on which our system of governance is based. Power to punish for contempt is necessary for the maintenance of effective legal system. It is exercised to prevent perversion of the course of justice.

11. No person can defy the court's order. Wilful would exclude casual, accidental, bona fide or unintentional acts or genuine inability to comply with the terms of the order. A petitioner who complains breach of the court's order must allege deliberate or contumacious disobedience of the court's order.”

(emphasis added)”

11. In the same judgment, it was also reiterated that the contempt of Court is a quasi criminal act and as such the standard of proof required is that of a criminal proceeding and the breach or wilful disobedience has to be established beyond all reasonable doubt.

12. Since in the present case, this Court does not find any wilful disobedience of any specific or categorical direction to either inspect the school or to order its takeover, it cannot be held that the petitioner is guilty of contempt.

13. Accordingly, present contempt petition is dismissed. However, petitioner is given liberty to challenge the order dated 06th August, 2015, if she so desires, in accordance with law.

MANMOHAN, J

AUGUST 11, 2015

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