

In the High Court of Punjab and Haryana at Chandigarh

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Criminal Appeal No.AS-14 of 2017

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Date of decision:16.2.2017

Ravinder Nath Dubey

...Appellant

v.

Shri Chand

...Respondent

....

Coram: Hon'ble Mr. Justice Inderjit Singh

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Present: Mr. Ashish Gupta, Advocate for the appellant.

Mr. Achin Gupta, Advocate for the respondent.

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Inderjit Singh, J.

This appeal has arisen out of the acceptance of Criminal Misc. No.A-1902-MA of 2015 granting leave to file appeal vide order passed today by this Court.

Learned counsel for the parties agree that the appeal may be heard today itself. I have heard learned counsel for the parties in the appeal.

This criminal appeal has been filed against the impugned order dated 17.8.2015 passed by learned Judicial Magistrate Ist Class, Faridkot, vide which the complaint filed by Ravinder Nath Dubey against Shri Chand under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 (hereinafter referred to as 'the NI Act') read with Section 357 Cr.P.C. has been dismissed in default.

It has been stated in the grounds of appeal that the order dated 17.8.2015 passed by the learned trial Court is a harsh as no effective hearing was taken place. It has been stated that the impugned order passed by the learned trial Court is not at all sustainable in the eyes of law for the simpliciter reason that the complaint in hand was fixed for defence evidence and for the last two dates, the defence evidence was not being led by the accused-respondent and even in the impugned order, it has not even been mentioned as to whether any defence witness was present on that date or not and it clearly implies that no defence was even present on the said date. It has been submitted that the complainant had been appearing before the learned trial Court mostly on each and every date of hearing. The complaint was fixed on 17.8.2015 for defence evidence of the accused. It has been mentioned that on that day the counsel for the appellant, namely, Mr. S.K. Dhir was busy in the another Court and the appellant himself was present in the Court premises, but suddenly he fell ill and left the Court premises for getting check-up from his personal doctor without informing his counsel. As the counsel was busy in another Court and was under the impression that the appellant was standing over there, as such he could not attend the trial Court and ultimately, the learned trial Court noticing the absence of the counsel for the appellant, dismissed the complaint in default vide impugned order dated 17.8.2015. Therefore, it has been prayed that the impugned order is liable to be quashed/set aside and the complaint of the appellant may be restored to its original number, in the interest of justice.

In this case, notice of motion was issued and the learned

counsel for the respondent has put in appearance and contested this appeal.

The complaint was pending before the learned Judicial Magistrate Ist Class, Faridkot on 17.8.2015 for defence evidence of the accused and on one date for the non-appearance of the complainant, this complaint filed under Section 138 of the NI Act has been dismissed in default vide the impugned order.

The learned counsel for the appellant argued that the appellant was regularly appearing in this complaint case and his absence on one of the dates was not intentional. Neither the appellant-complainant nor his counsel could appear before the trial Court on 17.8.2015 due to the fact that the appellant had suddenly fell ill and he has to leave the Court and his counsel was busy in another Court. Learned counsel for the appellant argued that the appellant in these proceedings was regularly appearing in the Court and there was no mala fide intention for not appearing before the trial Court.

A perusal of the record also shows that, in no way, by the absence, the complainant/appellant is to be benefitted in this complaint case nor there is anything on the record to show that there was any mala fide intention on the part of the complainant/appellant for his absence from the proceedings. The complainant/appellant has given the ground in the appeal that the complainant and his counsel could not appear before the Court. There was no necessity to dismiss the complaint vide impugned order on that day. The Court has also not considered the fact that earlier the complainant was appearing in this case regularly. The absence of the

complainant on one date in the complaint case is no ground to dismiss the complaint.

In the facts and circumstances of the present case, I find that the impugned order dated 17.8.2015 passed by the learned Judicial Magistrate Ist Class, Faridkot, has caused miscarriage of justice. If this order is not set aside, the complainant/appellant will suffer irreparable loss. It is settled law that the rights of the parties should be decided on merit as far as possible. The Court should do substantial justice between the parties and should not go into the technicalities of the law. Where technical consideration and merit or cause of substantial justice are pitted against each other, the cause of merit and substantial justice is to prevail.

Learned counsel for the appellant placed reliance on the judgment of Hon'ble Supreme Court in Mohd. Azeem v. A. Venkatesh and another, (2002) 7 SCC 726, in which it is held that one singular default in appearance on the part of complainant, dismissal of complaint is not proper. Cause shown by the complainant that he wrongly noted the date was not disbelieved and, therefore, it was a valid ground for restoration of the complaint. I have gone through this judgment, which fully applies to the facts of the present cases.

Learned counsel for the appellant also placed reliance on the judgment of Hon'ble Supreme Court in Aseem Shabanli Merchant v. Brij Mehra and another, (2005) 11 SCC 412 on the same point, where it is held that dismissal of the complaint for non-prosecution challenged to by brother of the complainant whether such orders can be recalled, it was held that

having regard to the facts and circumstances, interests of justice required that the order of the Magistrate acquitting the accused for non-prosecution, as affirmed by the High Court, deserved to be recalled so that the complaints could be tried on merits. The Hon'ble Supreme Court further held in this case that there is no hard and fast rule for recalling of such orders.

On the same point, learned counsel for the appellant also placed reliance on the judgments of this Court in Narender Parashar v. Jagbir Singh, 2009 (3) R.C.R. (Cr.) 246; Neh Pal Sharma v. Bijender Singh, 2009 (2) R.C.R. (Cr.) 751 and Purushotam Mantri v. Vinod Tandon alias Hari Nath Tandon, 2009 (1) R.C.R. (Cr.) 442; Om Parkash v. M/s Golden Forest India Ltd., 2008 (4) R.C.R. (Cr.) 445. I have gone through all these judgments, which fully apply to the facts of the present case.

Therefore, from the above, I find merit in this appeal and the same is allowed. The impugned order passed by the learned Judicial Magistrate Ist Class, Faridkot, dismissing the complaint is set aside.

This complaint is ordered to be restored at the stage from where it was dismissed by the trial Court. The trial Court is directed to proceed further as per law after giving notice to the parties concerned.

The parties are directed to appear before the trial Court on 15.3.2017.

February 16, 2017.

(Inderjit Singh)
Judge

hsp

NOTE: Whether speaking/reasoned: Yes

Whether reportable: No