

CRR-1001-2024

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

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Decided on: 17.05.2024

Ravinder Singh ...Petitioner

Versus

Saudagar Singh ...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ANOOP CHITKARA

Present: Mr. Amandeep Saini, Advocate for the petitioner.

ANOOP CHITKARA, J.

Criminal Complaint	CIS No.NACT/317/2017 PBSAA1-001155-2017 Date of order: 03.04.2024
Criminal Appeal	CRA-96-2024 CNR No.PBSA01-003149-2024

Aggrieved by the condition of depositing 20% of the compensation amount i.e. Rs.15 lacs while suspending the sentence in an appeal against the conviction, the convict-petitioner has come up before this Court u/s 401 CrPC against the condition, on the ground that he has no money to deposit the amount.

2. The nature of the order this Court proposes to pass, no notice is required to be issued and no response is required from the respondent.

3. Vide judgment dated 03.04.2024, passed by the Judicial Magistrate Ist Class, Kharar, the petitioner was convicted and sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for a period of one year and six months and to pay a compensation of Rs.15 lacs to the complainant, for commission of offence under Section 138 of Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 (for short N.I. Act). Feeling aggrieved, he had challenged the same before the Sessions Court. While suspending the sentence, vide order dated 23.04.2024, Additional Sessions Judge, SAS Nagar, directed the appellant to deposit 20% of the compensation amount within 30 days.

4. Section 148 of the N.I. Act was amended and w.e.f. 01.09.2018 Section 148 was inserted. As per Section 148 of N.I. Act, it is within the powers of the appellate Court to order payment pending appeal against conviction. As per Section 148(1), the Appellate



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Court can do the same on its own without there being any application filed by the complainant.

5. In Surinder Singh Deswal v. Virender Gandhi, 2019 LawSuit(SC) 1245, Hon’ble Supreme Court holds,

[8] It is the case on behalf of the appellants that as the criminal complaints against the appellants under Section 138 of the N.I. Act were lodged/filed before the amendment Act No. 20/2018 by which Section 148 of the N.I. Act came to be amended and therefore amended Section 148 of the N.I. Act shall not be made applicable. However, it is required to be noted that at the time when the appeals against the conviction of the appellants for the offence under Section 138 of the N.I. Act were preferred, Amendment Act No. 20/2018 amending Section 148 of the N.I. Act came into force w.e.f. 1.9.2018. Even, at the time when the appellants submitted application/s under Section 389 of the Cr.P.C. to suspend the sentence pending appeals challenging the conviction and sentence, amended Section 148 of the N.I. Act came into force and was brought on statute w.e.f. 1.9.2018. Therefore, considering the object and purpose of amendment in Section 148 of the N.I. Act and while suspending the sentence in exercise of powers under Section 389 of the Cr.P.C., when the first appellate court directed the appellants to deposit 25% of the amount of fine/compensation as imposed by the learned trial Court, the same can be said to be absolutely in consonance with the Statement of Objects and Reasons of amendment in Section 148 of the N.I. Act.

6. Given above, there is no merit in the petition. However, the interest of justice would suffice if the appeal pending before the appellate Court is taken on the priority. This Court requests the learned Appellate Court to decide these appeals on top priority preferably on or before 31.07.2024, latest by 31.08.2024. Till then, appellate Court would not insist for deposit of 20% amount.

7. The petition is partly allowed with the aforesaid observations. All pending applications, if any, stand disposed of. It is clarified that the Appellate Court shall proceed to decide the appeals notwithstanding even if 20% of the compensation amount is not deposited by the appellant till 31.07.2024 or 31.08.2024. However, in case, the appellant seeks any adjournment, then it shall be open for the Appellate Court to appoint a legal aid counsel on his behalf and proceed to hear the appeal on merits.

(ANOOP CHITKARA)
JUDGE

17.05.2024

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Whether speaking/reasoned: Yes

Whether reportable: No.