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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH

CRR(F)-1388-2024 (O&M)

Date of decision: 26.11.2024

Vinod Kumar

... Petitioner

Vs.

Manju Bala

... Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. Deepak Arora, Advocate
for the petitioner.

HARPREET SINGH BRAR, J. (ORAL)

1. The present revision petition has been preferred against the impugned order dated 20.07.2024 passed by learned Principal Judge, Family Court, Gurdaspur, vide which the application filed under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (for short 'Cr.P.C.') [*now Section 144 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (for short 'BNSS')*] was allowed and maintenance of Rs.10,000/- per month was awarded to be paid to the respondent.

2. The marriage between the petitioner and the respondent was



solemnized on 12.10.2018 according to Sikh rites and rituals. Out of this wedlock, no child was born. However, matrimonial dispute ensued between the couple and the respondent filed an application under Section 125 of Cr.P.C. (*now Section 144 of BNSS*) seeking maintenance of Rs.40,000/- per month. The petitioner filed a reply and contested the claim made by the respondent. Learned Family Court, vide impugned order dated 20.07.2024, granted maintenance allowance of Rs.10,000/- per month in favour of the respondent. Aggrieved by the same, the petitioner has approached this Court by filing the present petition.

3. Learned counsel for the petitioner, *inter alia*, contends that with the intervention of respectables, a compromise was effected between the parties and matrimonial dispute between them was amicably resolved and even a joint petition under Section 13-B of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 seeking divorce by way of mutual consent was filed, however, the respondent resiled from the compromise and backed out from the petition seeking divorce by way of mutual consent. She has already received her gold items and other articles and after recording her statement of first motion, learned Family Court directed her to appear on 16.11.2019 to record her second motion statement and the petitioner was ready and willing to pay the settled amount of Rs.2.50 lacs to the respondent. Further, the petitioner is jobless and there is no evidence available on record to remotely suggest that he is earning Rs.30,000/-



per month as assessed by learned Family Court. An exorbitant amount of Rs.10,000/- per month has been awarded as maintenance to the respondent and the petitioner is not in a position to pay such amount.

4. Having heard learned counsel for the petitioner and after perusing the record of the case with his able assistance, this Court finds no force in the arguments advanced on behalf of the petitioner.

5. The object and purpose behind granting maintenance is to ensure that the dependent spouse is not reduced to destitution or vagrancy on account of failure of marriage. At the same time, a just and careful balance must be struck to ensure that this provision does not degenerate into a weapon to punish the other spouse. The Courts are required to conduct the maintenance proceedings, while being alive to the legislative intent behind the provision under Section 125 Cr.P.C. (*now Section 144 of BNSS*) in its true spirit, which is to provide speedy assistance and social justice to women, children and infirm parents. The provisions of Section 125 Cr.P.C. (*now Section 144 of BNSS*) were enacted as a measure to further social justice and protect dependent women, children and parents, which also fall within the constitutional sweep of Article 15(3) reinforced by Article 39 of the Constitution of India.

6. A three-Judge Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Vimala (K.) Vs. Veeraswamy (K.) (1991) 2 SCC 375***, speaking through Justice Fatima



Beevi, opined as follows:

“3. Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure is meant to achieve a social purpose. The object is to prevent vagrancy and destitution. It provides a speedy remedy for the supply of food, clothing, and shelter to the deserted wife.”

7. Further, a two-Judge Bench of the Hon’ble Supreme Court in ***Kirtikant D. Vadodaria Vs. State of Gujarat (1996) 4 SCC 479***, speaking through Justice Faizan Uddin, opined as follows:

“15.... While dealing with the ambit and scope of the provision contained in Section 125 of the Code, it has to be borne in mind that the dominant and primary object is to give social justice to the woman, child and infirm parents, etc. and to prevent destitution and vagrancy by compelling those who can support those who are unable to support themselves but have a moral claim for support. The provisions in Section 125 provide a speedy remedy to those women, children and destitute parents who are in distress. The provisions in Section 125 are intended to achieve this special purpose. The dominant purpose behind the benevolent provisions contained in Section 125 clearly is that the wife, child and parents should not be left in a helpless state of distress, destitution and starvation.”

8. Another objective the legislature has sought to achieve by this provision is to provide maintenance *pendente lite* to the applicant spouse during proceedings emerging out of matrimonial disputes so that she/he can maintain herself/himself, have sufficient funds to pursue the litigation, and not suffer at the instance of the affluent spouse.

9. There is a general tendency on the part of the wife to amplify her needs and the husband to conceal his actual income, making it difficult to



determine the earning capacity of the rival claimants with exactitude. The rival claimants must scrupulously bring on record their actual respective earning capacities in order for the Court to arrive at quantum of maintenance which is just and fair in terms of principle of equistatus. The quantum of maintenance must be justifiable and realistic to provide succour to the dependent spouse and also to avoid occurrence of the two extremes of the maintenance being either paltry or extravagant, ensuring that neither of the two is reduced to a life of penury. The adequacy of the maintenance allowance has to be determined by the yardstick of the dependent spouse being able to lead a life of reasonable comfort.

10. While dealing with the issue of maintenance *in extenso*, a two Judge Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Rajnish Vs. Neha and another, (2021) 2 SCC 324*** laid down the criteria for determining quantum of maintenance and issued the following directions:

"VI Final Directions

130. In view of the foregoing discussion as contained in Part B - 1 to V of this judgment, we deem it appropriate to pass the following directions in exercise of our powers under Article 142 of the Constitution of India:

(a) Issue of overlapping jurisdiction

131. To overcome the issue of overlapping jurisdiction, and avoid conflicting orders being passed in different proceedings, it has become necessary to issue directions in this regard, so that there is uniformity in the practice followed by the Family



*Courts/District Courts/Magistrate Courts throughout the country.
We direct that:*

- (i) where successive claims for maintenance are made by a party under different statutes, the Court would consider an adjustment or setoff, of the amount awarded in the previous proceeding/s, while determining whether any further amount is to be awarded in the subsequent proceeding;*
- (ii) it is made mandatory for the applicant to disclose the previous proceeding and the orders passed therein, in the subsequent proceeding;*
- (iii) if the order passed in the previous proceeding/s requires any modification or variation, it would be required to be done in the same proceeding*

(b) Payment of Interim Maintenance

132. The Affidavit of Disclosure of Assets and Liabilities annexed as Enclosures I, II and III of this judgment, as may be applicable, shall be filed by both parties in all maintenance proceedings, including pending proceedings before the concerned Family Court / District Court / Magistrates Court, as the case may be, throughout the country.

(c) Criteria for determining the quantum of maintenance

133. For determining the quantum of maintenance payable to an applicant, the Court shall take into account the criteria enumerated in Part B III of the judgment.

134. The aforesaid factors are however not exhaustive, and the concerned Court may exercise its discretion to consider any other factor/s which may be necessary or of relevance in the facts and circumstances of a case.

(d) Date from which maintenance is to be awarded

135. We make it clear that maintenance in all cases will be awarded from the date of filing the application for maintenance, as held in Part B-IV above.



(e) Enforcement/Execution of orders of maintenance

136. For enforcement/execution of orders of maintenance, it is directed that an order or decree of maintenance may be enforced under Section 28A of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1956; Section 20(6) of the D.V. Act; and Section 128 of Cr.P.C may be applicable. The arder of maintenance may be enforced as a money decree of a civil court as per the provisions of the CPC more particularly Sections 51, 55, 58, 60 r.w. Order XXI."

11. From perusal of the record, it transpires that out of aforesaid Rs.2.50 lacs, which she received at the time of recording first motion statement in the proceedings initiated under Section 13-B of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the respondent has already returned Rs.1,15,000/- and Rs.78,000/- have been adjusted towards interim maintenance. Further, the petitioner is well qualified, having degree of B.Tech and he admitted that earlier, he was working as Software Developer in Destm Technologies, Mohali and now, as per his claim, he is jobless. It is trite law that an able-bodied husband is legally and morally bound to maintain his wife. However, if the husband is unemployed or documentary proof qua his income is not available, it can be reasonably assumed that he can work as a labourer and earn the prevalent minimum wage. Reliance in this regard can be placed on judgments rendered by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Bhuwan Mohan Singh Vs. Meena, 2014(3) R.C.R (Criminal) 723*** and this Court in ***Amanjot Singh Vs. Rajwant Kaur, 2017(1) R.C.R (Criminal) 1070, Satish @Bittoo Vs. Suresh Devi, 2018(1) Law Herald 595, Dalip Kumar @ Deepa Vs. Sunita and another, 2012(2)***



R.C.R.(Criminal) 434 and Sandeep Vs. Suman in CR-1802-2023 decided on 22.03.2023.

12. A perusal of the impugned order passed by learned Family Court makes it evident that the Court below has duly considered the material placed before it for determining the quantum of maintenance. A careful and just balance has been drawn, keeping in view the spiralling inflation rates and high cost of living corresponding to the reasonable needs of the respondent. Learned counsel for the petitioner has not been able to indicate any perversity in the impugned order, which warrants interference by this Court.

13. Accordingly, the present petition is dismissed being bereft of any merit.

14. All the pending miscellaneous application(s), if any, shall stand disposed of.

26.11.2024
vishnu

[HARPREET SINGH BRAR]
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned : Yes/No

Whether reportable : Yes/No