

**HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
Bench: Hon'ble Mr. Justice Rajbir Sehrawat**

Date of Decision: 14th November, 2023

CRM-M No.37819 of 2021

Sohan Lal & others Petitioners

Versus

State of Punjab & another Respondents

Section, Acts, Rules, and Articles Mentioned:

Section 482 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.P.C.)

Sections 3 (X), (XIV), (XV) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

Sections 323, 504, 506 & 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

Section 320 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.P.C.)

Subject of the Judgement:

Quashing of Criminal Proceedings – The judgment concerns a petition under Section 482 of the Cr.P.C. for quashing a criminal complaint registered under the SC/ST Act and various sections of the IPC based on an out-of-court compromise between the parties.

Headnotes:

Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (Cr.P.C.) – Section 482 – Quashing of Proceedings – Petition for quashing of criminal complaint under the SC/ST Act and IPC sections due to compromise between parties – Settlement reached out of court with no coercion or undue influence – Emphasis on the legal system's goal to reconcile social conflicts and minimize adverse societal impacts of disputes – Recognition of compromises in criminal disputes, barring grave offences involving governance, administration, or severe societal impact. [Para 1-5]

Supreme Court Guidelines – Compromise in Criminal Cases – Distinction between quashing criminal proceedings in High Court’s inherent jurisdiction and compounding offences in trial court – High Court’s power to quash proceedings based on nature and gravity of crime, and whether continuation of proceedings constitutes an abuse of legal process – Heinous offences and those under special statutes like the Prevention of Corruption Act not suitable for quashing based on compromise – Cases with a predominantly civil nature, like financial or matrimonial disputes, can be quashed if the parties have settled and continuation of proceedings would be unjust. [Para 6]

Decision – Present case suitable for quashing based on compromise – Complaint and subsequent proceedings under the SC/ST Act and relevant IPC sections against petitioners quashed, honoring the out-of-court settlement. [Para 7-8]

Referred Cases:

Gian Singh Vs. State of Punjab and another, 2012(4) RCR (Criminal) 543

Representing Advocates:

Mr. Harpreet Singh Jakhal, Advocate for the petitioners.

Mr. Gurpal Singh Dhillon, AAG, Punjab.

Ms. Kiranjeet Kaur, Advocate for respondent No.2.

RAJBIR SEHRAWAT, J. (Oral)

1. This petition under Section 482 of the Code of Criminal Procedure has been filed for quashing of Criminal complaint bearing number RBT 572-2 of 2012 dated 05.07.2012 (Annexure P-1) registered under Sections 3 (X), (XIV), (XV) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and Sections 323, 504, 506 & 34 IPC at Police Station Sadar Abohar, District Fazilka (Annexure P-1) as well as quashing of summoning

order dated 16.09.2016, along with all consequential proceedings, on the basis of compromise (Annexure P-4).

2. Vide order dated 03.12.2021, the parties were directed to appear before the learned trial Court/Illaq Magistrate, for getting their statements recorded; as to the genuineness of the compromise. In compliance thereof, report of Additional Sessions Judge, Fazilka, dated 12.01.2022, has been received, wherein, it has been noticed that the matter has been compromised between the parties with their free consent and without any coercion or undue influence from any quarter. 3. The ultimate aim, objective and goal of a legal system is to reconcile the social conflicts. Law is required only to ensure that people do not have to fight with each other just to protect their right to property, right to life and liberty and other rights secured to them by the legal system. The civil disputes are the conflicts between two parties, having lesser overtones for the social order, social harmony or the society as such. Hence absolute freedom is given to the parties to settle their disputes by compromises, of course, coming with certain legal consequences as well. However, the criminal disputes do not necessarily restrict themselves to only two parties to the dispute in terms of their scope, consequences and effect. The criminal acts tend to cast their effect and consequences even upon the society at large. Therefore, the law prescribes punishment, severe punishments and the extreme punishments, including death penalty for criminal acts.

4. However more often than not the civil disputes or inter-se conflicts of two parties transforms themselves into criminal aspect. Therefore, the legal system plays a role to resolve the conflict between two parties; with the added task of ensuring that the adverse impact of dispute qua society at large is minimized. But still the core idea is to resolve the conflict between two sides by putting it to rest. Therefore, even the criminal law is required to give due regard to the wishes of the parties to dispute. Recognizing this principle only, the Indian legal System also provides for recognizing the compromise between two sides of a criminal dispute. Section 320 Cr.P.C. is an express provision in this regard. This section not only provides for compounding during the trial, but permits compounding even at appellate or revisional stage. However by its very nature and scope, Section 320 Cr.P.C. cannot be the sole repository; wherein the recognition to a compromise between the parties have; necessarily; to be confined. This section relates only to the offences prescribed under the Indian Penal Code. There are a lot more

offences prescribed outside IPC. Even to the offences existing in the IPC new dimensions are added from time to time, making the existing offences to be lighter or stringent and even new modalities of proof of offences are being recognized in view of technological advancement. This necessitates and requires the need for looking beyond Section 320 Cr.P.C. to recognize the compromise between the parties to dispute. But to maintain the sanctity of the procedure prescribed for criminal trial; the Trial Court cannot be permitted to travel beyond the scope prescribed under that procedure. Hence the need for invoking Section 482 Cr.P.C. by the High Court.

5. But, as observed above, the wishes of only parties to the criminal dispute would not always be sufficient to terminate a criminal trial in view of the patent, latent or subtle effect; their conduct would have left qua the society at large. Therefore the offences committed by persons involved in governance or administration for acquiring official power or while exercising office power cannot be permitted to be compromised. Likewise, even the offences involving only two private persons, but reflecting depravity of character or involving causing intentional loss of life or causing intentional loss of property by extending imminent threat of loss of life; cannot be permitted to be compromised. Except the abovementioned grave offences, there is every reason that all other offences should be permitted to be compromised by the Court. Since the proof of offences before the Court, again would involve the conduct of the parties to dispute, therefore if the Court does not permit the same to be compromised then the parties would tend to play tricks upon the Court to ensure the acquittal of accused by subverting the administration of criminal justice. And it is never in the interest of administration of criminal justice to force the citizen to learn and adopt the tricks designed to be played upon Courts to subvert the justice system. So it would always be in the interest of justice itself; that the compromise between the parties is recognized and the citizen remain moored and committed to the

essentials of the system of administration of justice, at least, qua those offences, which the interest of society does not permit to be compromised.

6. Hon'ble the Supreme Court has amply clarified the legal position on recognizing compromising in the case of **Gian Singh Vs. State of Punjab and another, 2012(4) RCR (Criminal) 543**, and has observed as under:-

“57. The position that emerges from the above discussion can be summarised thus: the power of the High Court in quashing a criminal proceeding or FIR or complaint in exercise of its inherent jurisdiction is distinct and different from the power given to a criminal court for compounding the offences under Section 320 of the Code. Inherent power is of wide plenitude with no statutory limitation but it has to be exercised in accord with the guideline engrafted in such power viz; (i) to secure the ends of justice or (ii) to prevent abuse of the process of any Court. In what cases power to quash the criminal proceeding or complaint or F.I.R may be exercised where the offender and victim have settled their dispute would depend on the facts and circumstances of each case and no category can be prescribed. However, before exercise of such power, the High Court must have due regard to the nature and gravity of the crime. Heinous and serious offences of mental depravity or offences like murder, rape, dacoity, etc. cannot be fittingly quashed even though the victim or victim's family and the offender have settled the dispute. Such offences are not private in nature and have serious impact on society. Similarly, any compromise between the victim and offender in relation to the offences under special statutes like Prevention of Corruption Act or the offences committed by public servants while working in that capacity etc; cannot provide for any basis for quashing criminal proceedings involving such offences. But the criminal cases having overwhelmingly and predominatingly civil flavour stand on different footing for the purposes of quashing, particularly the offences arising from commercial, financial, mercantile, civil, partnership or such like transactions or the offences arising

out of matrimony relating to dowry, etc. or the family disputes where the wrong is basically private or personal in nature and the parties have resolved their entire dispute. In this category of cases, High Court may quash criminal proceedings if in its view, because of the compromise between the offender and victim, the possibility of conviction is remote and bleak and continuation of criminal case would put accused to great oppression and prejudice and extreme injustice would be caused to him by not quashing the criminal case despite full and complete settlement and compromise with the victim. In other words, the High Court must consider whether it would be unfair or contrary to the interest of justice to continue with the criminal proceeding or continuation of the criminal proceeding would tantamount to abuse of process of law despite settlement and compromise between the victim and wrongdoer and whether to secure the ends of justice, it is appropriate that criminal case is put to an end and if the answer to the above question(s) is in affirmative, the High Court shall be well within its jurisdiction to quash the criminal proceeding.”

7. The present case does not fall in anyone of the exceptions envisaged above. Hence, in view of the report of Additional Sessions Judge, Fazilka, dated 12.01.2022 made in pursuance of the order dated 03.12.2021 passed by this Court, the Court feels that no useful purpose would be served by keeping the proceedings alive. It will be in the interest of justice, if the settlement reached between the parties is accepted.

8. Accordingly, the present petition is allowed. The Complaint bearing No. RBT 572-2 of 2012 dated 05.07.2012 (Annexure P-1) registered under sections 3 (X), (XIV), (XV) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and Sections 323, 504, 506 & 34 IPC at Police Station Sadar Abohar, District Fazilka (Annexure P-1) as well as quashing of summoning order dated 16.09.2016 and all consequential proceedings arising therefrom, are hereby quashed qua the petitioners, on the basis of compromise arrived at between the parties.

*Disclaimer: Always compare with the original copy of judgment from the official website.