

Dheeraj vs State Of Nct Of Delhi & Ors on 6 August, 2024

Author: Manoj Kumar Ohri

Bench: Manoj Kumar Ohri

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* IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI
+ CRL.M.C. 4433/2023
DHEERAJ

STATE OF NCT OF DELHI & ORS.

Through: Mr. Aashnee
Mr. Sahil Arora, Mr.
Kapoor Arora, Mr. Vi
Priyanka Mishra, Adv
Respondent Nos.2 and

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE MANOJ KUMAR OHRI

% 06.08.2024

1. The present petition has been filed seeking quashing of FIR No.677/2015 registered under Sections 363/366/376 IPC read with Sections 6 POCSO Act at P.S. Keshavpuram, Delhi and the consequent proceedings arising therefrom.

2. Learned counsel for the petitioner submits that the FIR was lodged under Section 363 IPC at the instance of respondent No.2/complainant who is the brother of respondent No.3/prosecutrix. It is further submitted that the Respondent No.3/prosecutrix in her statements recorded under Sections 161 as well as 164 Cr.P.C. has stated that she has voluntarily gone with the petitioner. He further states that the parties have subsequently got married to each other and even have 2 children out of the wedlock. Further, at the time This is a digitally signed order.

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3. Respondent Nos.2 and 3, who are present in the Court, have been identified. The chargesheet has been filed under Sections 363/366/376 IPC read with Sections 6 POCSO Act.

4. The petition is opposed by learned APP for the State, who states that Section 376 IPC is involved in the present matter, which is not only serious and heinous, but also has a serious impact upon the society and therefore, the same cannot be quashed solely based upon the fact that the parties have married each other or settled the disputes. He has further stated that the investigation has been completed and the chargesheet has also been filed in the present case. It is also stated that the factum of marriage between the parties stands verified and in this regard a status report has been placed on record.

In support of his submission, he has referred to the Supreme Court decisions in *Gian Singh v. State of Punjab* &Anr.³¹ and *State of Madhya Pradesh v. Laxmi Narayan &Ors.*³²

5. The power of High Court under Section 482 Cr.P.C. to quash proceedings in matters wherein non-compoundable offences are involved is well recognized. The Supreme Court in *B.S. Joshi v. State of Haryana*³³ observed that Section 320 Cr.P.C. does not limit or control the powers vested in High Court under Section 482 Cr.P.C., and the High Court is empowered to quash criminal proceedings/FIR, even if non-

(2012) 10 SCC 303 (2019) 5 SCC 688 This is a digitally signed order.

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17. It is manifest that simply because an offence is not compoundable under Section 320 IPC is by itself no reason for the High Court to refuse exercise of its power under Section 482 Cr.P.C. That power can in our opinion be exercised in cases where there is no chance of recording a conviction against the accused and the entire exercise of a trial is destined to be an exercise in futility. There is a subtle distinction between compounding of an offence by the parties before the trial court or in appeal on one hand and the exercise of power by the High Court to quash the prosecution under Section 482 Cr.P.C. on the other. While a Court trying an accused or hearing an appeal against conviction, may not be competent to permit compounding of an offences based on a settlement arrived at between the parties in cases where the offences are non-compoundable under Section 320, the High Court may quash the prosecution even in cases where the offences with which the accused stand charged are non-compoundable. The inherent powers of the High Court under Section 482 Cr.P.C. are not for that purpose controlled by Section 320 Cr.P.C.

18. Having said so, we must hasten to add that the plenitude of the power under Section 482 Cr.P.C. by itself, makes it obligatory for the High Court to exercise the

same with utmost care and caution. The width and the nature of the power itself demands that its exercise is sparing and only in cases where the High Court is, for reasons to be recorded, of the clear view that continuance of the prosecution would be nothing but an abuse of the process of law. It is neither necessary nor proper for us to (2003) 4 SCC 675 (2008) 9 SCC 677 (2008) 16 SCC 1 (2011) 10 SCC 705 This is a digitally signed order.

The authenticity of the order can be re-verified from Delhi High Court Order Portal by scanning the QR code shown above. The Order is downloaded from the DHC Server on 10/08/2024 at 00:14:18 enumerate the situations in which the exercise of power under Section 482 may be justified. All that we need to say is that the exercise of power must be for securing the ends of justice and only in cases where refusal to exercise that power may result in the abuse of process of law. The High Court may be justified in declining interference if it is called upon to appreciate evidence for it cannot assume the role of an appellate court while dealing with a petition under Section 482 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Subject to the above, the High Court will have to consider the facts and circumstances of each case to determine whether it is a fit case in which the inherent powers may be invoked. xxx"

6. In *Gian Singh* (Supra), while dealing with the power of High Court to quash criminal proceedings under Section 482 Cr.P.C., the Supreme Court observed as under:-

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61. 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 This is a digitally signed order.

The authenticity of the order can be re-verified from Delhi High Court Order Portal by scanning the QR code shown above. The Order is downloaded from the DHC Server on 10/08/2024 at 00:14:18 have serious impact on society....

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To a similar extent are the observations of the Court in Laxmi Narayan (Supra).

7. While the above-mentioned decisions put forth the view that Section 376 IPC being a serious and heinous offence cannot be quashed based upon settlement arrived at between the parties, however, the same is not set in stone. In appropriate cases, considering the facts of a particular case, the Supreme Court as well as this Court has exercised its power to quash the proceedings involving Section 376 IPC.

Reference, in this regard, may be made to the decision of the Supreme Court in Jatin Agarwal v. State of Telangana &Anr.37, wherein while quashing an FIR registered under Section 417, 420 and 376 IPC, it was stated:-

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5. Considering the aforesaid facts and keeping in view that the respondent no.2/complainant has herself made a statement before us that she has married the appellant and now living happily, we exercise our powers under Article 142 of the Constitution of India and to do complete justice in the matter, we quash the FIR dated 16.08.2020 lodged by the respondent no.2 against the appellant under Sections 417, 420 and 376 IPC. xxx"

Further, in Kapil Gupta v. State (NCT of Delhi) &Anr.38, the Supreme Court, while dealing with a case wherein a petition for quashing an FIR registered under Section 376 was dismissed by the High Court, and after due 2022 SCC OnLine SC 1969 This is a digitally signed order.

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"11. No doubt that the learned ASG is right in relying on various judgments of this Court which reiterate the legal position that in heinous and serious offences like murder or rape, the Court should not quash the proceedings. It will be relevant to refer to paras 29.5 to 29.7 of the judgment of this Court in Narinder Singh v. State of Punjab, which reads thus:

"29.5 While exercising its powers, the High Court is to examine as to whether the possibility of conviction is remote and bleak and continuation of criminal cases would put the accused to great oppression and prejudice and extreme injustice would be caused to him by not quashing the criminal cases.

xxx 29.7 . While deciding whether to exercise its power under Section 482 of the Code or not, timings of settlement plays a crucial role. Those cases where the settlement is arrived at immediately after the alleged commission of offence and the matter is still under investigation, the High Court may be liberal in accepting the settlement to

quash the criminal proceedings/investigation. It is because of the reason that at this stage the investigation is still on and even the charge-sheet has not been filed. Likewise, those cases where the charge is framed but the evidence is yet to start or the evidence is still at infancy stage, the High Court can show benevolence in exercising its powers favourably, but after prima facie assessment of the circumstances/material mentioned above. On the other hand, where the prosecution evidence is almost complete or after the conclusion of the evidence the matter is at the stage of argument, normally the High (2022) 15 SCC 44 (2014) 6 SCC 466 This is a digitally signed order.

The authenticity of the order can be re-verified from Delhi High Court Order Portal by scanning the QR code shown above. The Order is downloaded from the DHC Server on 10/08/2024 at 00:14:19 Court should refrain from exercising its power under Section 482 of the Code, as in such cases the trial court would be in a position to decide the case finally on merits..."

12. It can thus be seen that this Court has clearly held that though the Court should be slow in quashing the proceedings wherein heinous and serious offences are involved, the High Court is not foreclosed from examining as to whether there exists material for incorporation of such an offence or as to whether there is sufficient evidence which if proved would lead to proving the charge for the offence charged with. The Court has also to take into consideration as to whether the settlement between the parties is going to result into harmony between them which may improve their mutual relationship.

13. The Court has further held that it is also relevant to consider as to what is the stage of the proceedings. It has been observed that if an application is made at a belated stage wherein the evidence has been led and the matter is at the stage of arguments or judgment, the Court should be slow to exercise the power to quash the proceedings. However, if such an application is made at an initial stage before commencement of trial, the said factor will weigh with the court in exercising its power.

xxx"

8. Positive reference may also be made to the decision of Co-ordinate Benches of this Court in Amar Kumar &Anr. v. State (Govt. of NCT of Delhi) &Anr.⁴⁰, Prem Kumar v. State &Ors.⁴¹, Rihan v. State (Govt. of NCT Delhi) &Anr.⁴², Anshuman v. State &Anr.⁴³, Yojan Sharma v. State &Anr.⁴⁴, Mohit v. Govt. of NCT Delhi &Anr.⁴⁵, wherein while noting the 2023 SCC OnLine Del 8452 2024 SCC OnLine Del 628 2023 SCC OnLine Del 4436 2023 SCC OnLine Del 2050 2023 SCC OnLine Del 5612 2024 SCC OnLine Del 1222 This is a digitally signed order.

The authenticity of the order can be re-verified from Delhi High Court Order Portal by scanning the QR code shown above. The Order is downloaded from the DHC Server on 10/08/2024 at 00:14:21 factum of settlement/marriage between the prosecutrix and the accused as well as the facts of the respective case, the FIR registered under Section 376 IPC (as well as other Sections mentioned

therein) have been quashed.

9. What emerges from the discussion undertaken above is that while as a matter of practice, serious and heinous offences ought not to be quashed by exercise of powers under Section 482 Cr.P.C., as it can have detrimental impact upon society, however, at the same time, the Court is not completely divested of the power to quash such proceedings. In appropriate cases, upon a consideration of the facts including the evidence available, the chances of conviction, the timing of the settlement/marriage as well as its actual effect, the Court can exercise its power under Section 482 to quash such proceedings, in the interest of justice and to put a quietus to the entire incident. However, at the sake of repetition, it is clarified that there is no blanket rule that such quashing should or should not take place. While quashing of serious and heinous offence like rape solely based upon settlement/marriage may not always be warranted, it can be done in cases where the peculiar facts warrant the same.

10. The present case arises out of the FIR lodged by respondent No.2 wherein he had levelled allegations under Section 363 IPC. Admittedly, respondent No.3 had willingly left with the petitioner and gotten married to the petitioner on 29.10.2019. They are living together and even have two children out of the wedlock. Thereafter, respondent Nos.2, 3 and the petitioner entered into a settlement. The statements of the prosecutrix recorded under Sections 161 and 164 Cr.P.C have also been placed on the file, a reading of which would show that she has categorically stated that she had left with the petitioner out of her own free will and gotten married to This is a digitally signed order.

The authenticity of the order can be re-verified from Delhi High Court Order Portal by scanning the QR code shown above. The Order is downloaded from the DHC Server on 10/08/2024 at 00:14:22 him with consent. The statement of the mother of the prosecutrix u/s 161 Cr.P.C is also there where she confirms the same. In the present proceedings, respondent Nos. 2 and 3 have stated that they do not want continuation of any criminal proceedings/this FIR against the petitioner.

11. The petitioner, who is present in Court, has been identified by his counsel as well as the I.O. Respondent Nos.2 and 3, who are present in Court, have been identified by the I.O. Respondent Nos.2 and 3 state that they have settled all their disputes with the petitioner and join in the prayer for quashing of the FIR. Respondent No.3/prosecutrix claims that she is 22 years of age.

12. Considering the facts of the present case, the fact that the High Court is well within its right to quash proceedings emanating from Section 376 IPC and the fact that the parties got married to each, have been living together since and even have 2 children out of the wedlock, the present petition is allowed and FIR No.677/2015 registered under Sections 363/366/376 IPC read with Sections 6 POCSO Act at P.S. Keshavpuram, Delhi and proceedings emanating therefrom are quashed.

13. With the above directions, the petition is disposed of.

MANOJ KUMAR OHRI, J AUGUST 6, 2024 na This is a digitally signed order.

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