

AIR 2002 SUPREME COURT 270 "Shailendra Kumar v. State of Bihar"
= 2001 AIR SCW 4984

(From : Patna)

Coram : 3 M. B. SHAH, B. N. AGRAWAL AND A. PASAYAT, JJ.

Cri. Appeal No. 1218 of 2001 (arising out of SLP (Cri) No. 3184 of 2000), D/- 28 -11 -2001.

Shailendra Kumar, Appellant v. State of Bihar and others, Respondents.

Criminal P.C. (2 of 1974), S.311, S.276 - TRIAL - Criminal trial - Closure of prosecution evidence - Without informing Investigating Officer - And merely on ground that public prosecutor has not sought time to examine further witnesses - Not proper - Manner adopted to dispose of prosecution sordid and repulsive - Application filed by State under S. 311 for examining witnesses is tenable.

Cri. M. No. 16453 of 2000, D/- 3-7-2000 (Patna), Reversed.

After examining 2-3 formal witnesses the sessions Court, trying a murder case, closed the prosecution evidence on ground that the public prosecutor has not made any prayer for adjournment or for examining other witnesses. No notice or summons was issued to the Police Station Officer in-charge.

Held, in a murder trial it is sordid and repulsive matter that without informing the police station officer-in-charge, the matters are proceeded by the Court and by the APP and tried to be disposed of as if the prosecution has not led any evidence. From the facts, it appears that accused wants to frustrate the prosecution by unjustified means and it appears that by one way or the other the Addl. Sessions Judge as well as the APP have not taken any interest in discharge of their duties. It was the duty of the Sessions Judge to issue summons to the Investigating Officer if he failed to remain present at the time of trial of the case. The presence of Investigating Officer at the time of trial is must. It is his duty to keep the witnesses

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present. If there is failure on part of any witness to remain present, it is the duty of the Court to take appropriate action including issuance ofailable/non-ailable warrants as the case may be. It should be well understood that prosecution cannot be frustrated by such methods and victims of the crime cannot be left in lurch.

Even though the order closing prosecution evidence was approved by the High Court, it was competent for the Court to allow application filed by State under S. 311 for examination of witnesses.

Cri. M. No. 16453 of 2000, D/- 3-7-2000 (Patna), Reversed. (Paras 9, 10, 11)

Cases Referred : Chronological Paras

Rajendra Prasad v. Narcotic Cell, AIR 1999 SC 2292 : 1999 AIR SCW 2356 : 1999 Cri LJ 3529 : (1999) 6 SCC 110 11

Ms. Kamakshi S. Mehlwal, Advocate (NP), for Appellant; B. B. Singh and Shiva Pujan Singh Advocates, for Respondents.

Judgement

SHAH, J. :- Leave granted.

2. This appeal has been filed against the judgment and order dated 3-7-2000 passed by the High Court Patna in Cri. Misc. No. 16453 of 2000 confirming the order dated 2-6-2000 passed by the Additional Sessions Judge, Gaya.

3. It is the contention of the appellant that his mother was done to death by the accused by forming unlawful assembly who were armed with lethal weapons. FIR was lodged with Bodh Gaya police station on 9-10-1991 against 15 named accused and 25 to 30 unknown persons. On 27-8-1993 the case was taken up for trial by the 5th Additional Sessions Judge, Gaya in Sessions Trial No. 24 of 1993. Charges were framed against the accused persons on 27-8-1993 for the offence punishable under Sections 148, 149, 323, 449 and 302 IPC.

4. After examining two or three formal witnesses, the learned Sessions Judge closed the evidence of prosecution on the ground that APP has not made any prayer either oral or written for adjournment or for examining other witnesses. The prosecution evidence was declared to have been closed and the matter was fixed for recording the statement of accused.

5. Thereafter, the prosecution filed an application for transferring the case from the Court of 5th Addl. Sessions Judge. However, the 5th Addl. Sessions Judge was superannuated and the case was transferred to 2nd Addl. Sessions Judge, Gaya, who by his order dated 20-9-1995 was pleased to recalled order dated 3-9-1994 passed by the 5th Addl. Sessions Judge, Gaya by which the prosecution evidence was directed to be closed. He also directed the APP to produce the witnesses on the next date of hearing.

6. That order was challenged by the accused by filing Criminal Revision No. 530 of 1995 before the High Court of Patna. The High Court vide its order dated 1-2-2000 allowed the revision application on the ground that "it is well settled that criminal Court cannot recall his earlier order".

7. Again on 12-5-2000 the State filed an application under Section 311 of Code of Criminal Procedure before the Addl. Sessions Judge, Gaya for examining the witnesses. That application was rejected by order 2-6-2000 on the ground that application by the State has no meaning in view of the order passed by the High Court in revision application. At the time of hearing of that application, APP remained absent. Thereafter, the appellant-informant preferred Criminal Misc. No. 16453 of 2000 before the High Court. That application was also dismissed by impugned judgment on the ground that it was not proper for the High Court to interfere with the order passed by the Sessions Judge. That order is challenged by filing this appeal, wherein it has been contended that the previous order passed by the High Court on dated 1-2-2000 is on the face of it illegal, erroneous and against the provisions of Cr. P.C.

8. In counter filed by officer-in-charge of Bodh Gaya Police Station, District Gaya, it has been pointed out that the concerned Investigating Officers, at present, are not posted at Bodh Gaya Police Station and even in other police stations within the District of Gaya. He specifically states, "it is submitted that he was never served with notice or summons or in no way communicated by

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the Court of law or any other agency including A.P.P to bring the witness up to the trial Court." He also stated that after perusing the entire relevant record and registers at the office of Bodh Gaya police station, Gaya, he has not found any summon or any sort of notice concerning the case under reference received by his office. In paragraph No. 9, he has clarified that after investigation it was found that summons were issued against witnesses No. 1 to 3 through Nazir of Civil Court Gaya but surprisingly enough the said summons were never moved to the police station Bodh Gaya. It is his further say that if

opportunity is given, the witnesses named in the charge-sheet could be brought before the Court either by issue of notices or summons and he will make his best efforts to produce the witnesses before the concerned Court within reasonable time.

9. In our view in a murder trial it is sordid and repulsive matter that without informing the police station officer-in-charge, the matters are proceeded by the Court and by the APP and tried to be disposed of as if the prosecution has not led any evidence. From the facts stated above, it appears that accused wants to frustrate the prosecution by unjustified means and it appears that by one way or the other the Addl. Sessions Judge as well as the APP have not taken any interest in discharge of their duties. It was the duty of the Sessions Judge to issue summons to the investigating officer if he failed to remain present at the time of trial of the case. The presence of investigating officer at the time of trial is a must. It is his duty to keep the witnesses present. If there is failure on part of any witness to remain present, it is the duty of the Court to take appropriate action including issuance of bailable/non-bailable warrants as the case may be. It should be well understood that prosecution cannot be frustrated by such methods and victims of the crime cannot be left in lurch.

10. Learned counsel for the respondent accused however submitted that in this case there is no question of referring to Section 311, Cr. P.C. in view of earlier order dated 1-2-2000 passed by the High Court setting aside the order dated 20-9-1995 passed by the Additional Sessions Judge recalling the order dated 3-9-1994 by which the prosecution evidence was declared to have been closed. This submission is without any substance. Section 311 empowers the Court to summons material witnesses though not summoned as witness and to examine or recall and re-examine if their evidence appears to it to be essential to the just decision of the case. It reads thus :-

"311. Power to summon material witness, or examine person present-Any Court may, at any stage of any inquiry, trial or other proceeding under this Code, summon any person as a witness, or examine any person in attendance, though not summoned as a witness, or recall and re-examine any person already examined; and the Court shall summon and examine or recall and re-examine any such person if his evidence appears to it to be essential to the just decision of the case."

11.

Bare reading of the aforesaid section reveals that it is of very wide amplitude and if there is any negligence, lapses or mistakes by not examining material witnesses, the Court's function to render just decision by examining such witnesses at any stage is not, in any way, impaired. This Court in *Rajendra Prasad v. Narcotic Cell* [(1999) 6 SCC 110] observed. "After all, function of the criminal Court is administration of criminal justice and not to count errors committed by the parties or to find out and declare who among the parties performed better". AIR 1999 SC 2292 : 1999 AIR SCW 2356 : 1999 CriLJ 3529

12. In this view of the matter, appeal is allowed. Impugned order passed by the High Court confirming the order dated 2-6-2000 of Additional Sessions Judge, Gaya is set aside. Application filed by the State under Section 311 Cr. P.C. is allowed. The Sessions Judge is directed to proceed with the matter on day to day basis by strictly adhering to

Section 309 Cr. P.C. and directing the officer-in-charge of police station Bodh Gaya to keep witnesses present in the Court for their examination.

Appeal allowed.

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