

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

State of H.P.

Vs.

Mushtaq Ahmad

S.L.P.(Crl.)No.1102/2007

(Dr. Arijit Pasayat and Lokeshwar Singh Pantaa Panta,JJ.)

26.03.2007

JUDGMENT

Arijit Pasayat, J.

1. Challenge in this special leave petition is to the order passed by a Division Bench of the Himachal Pradesh High Court dismissing the application filed by the petitioner-State under Section 378(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (in short the 'Code').

2. Grievance of the petitioner is that: the application was dismissed summarily without indicating any reason. It is stated by learned Counsel for the petitioner that this Court has in many cases deprecated the practice of such dismissal. The High Court has not given any reasons for refusing to grant leave to file appeal against acquittal, and seems to have been completely oblivious to the fact that by such refusal, a close scrutiny of the order of acquittal, by the appellate forum, has been lost once and for all. The manner in which appeal against acquittal has been dealt with by the High Court leaves much to be desired. Reasons introduce clarity in an order. On plainest consideration of justice, the High Court ought to have set forth its reasons, howsoever brief, in its order indicative of an application of its mind, all the more when its order is amenable to further avenue of challenge. The absence of reasons has rendered the High Court order not sustainable. Similar view was expressed in *State of U.P. v. Battan and Ors.*¹ :. About two decades back in *State of Maharashtra v. Vithal Rao Pritirao Chawan*²: the desirability of a speaking order while dealing with an application for grant of leave was highlighted. The requirement of indicating reasons in such cases has been judicially recognized as imperative. The view was re-iterated in *Jawahar Lal Singh v. Naresh Singh and Ors.*: 1987CriLJ698 . Judicial discipline to abide by declaration of law by this Court, cannot be forsaken, under any pretext by any authority or Court, be it even the Highest Court in a State, oblivious to Article 141 of the Constitution of India, 1950 (in short the 'Constitution').

3. Even in respect of administrative orders *Lord Denning M.R. in Breen v. Amalgamated Engineering*³

*Union*³ observed "The giving of reasons is one of the fundamentals of good administration". In *Alexander Machinery (Dudley) Ltd. v. Crabtree*⁴ it was observed: "Failure to give reasons amounts to denial of justice". Reasons are live links between the mind of the decision taker to the controversy in question and the decision or conclusion arrived at". Reasons substitute subjectivity by objectivity. The emphasis on recording reasons is that if the decision reveals the "inscrutable face of the sphinx", it can, by its silence, render it virtually impossible for the Courts to perform their appellate function or exercise the power of judicial review in adjudging the validity of the decision. Right to reason is an indispensable part of a sound judicial system, reasons at least sufficient to indicate an application of mind to the matter before Court. Another rationale is that the affected party can know why the decision has gone against him. One of the salutary requirements of natural justice is spelling out reasons for the order made, in other words, a speaking out. The "inscrutable face of a sphinx" is ordinarily incongruous with a judicial or quasi-judicial performance. (See *State of Punjab v. Bhag Singh*⁵:

4. In the background of what has been stated in Bhag Singh's case (supra) the grievance of learned Counsel for the petitioner-State about the manner in which the petition has been dismissed is unexceptionable. But we have perused the judgment of the trial Court. Considering the nature of the findings recorded we do not consider this to be a fit case where exercise of jurisdiction under Article 136 of the Constitution is called for. The petition is accordingly dismissed.

Judgment Referred.

¹(2001)10SCC 0607

²AIR1982SC1215

³(1971) 1 All E.R. 1148

⁴(1974) LCR 0120

⁵(2004) CriLJ 0916