

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

V.K. Vasantha Kumari

Vs.

R. Sudhakar

C.A.Nos.8459-8462 of 2014

(J. Chelameswar and A.K. Sikri JJ.)

04.09.2014

JUDGMENT

CHELAMESWAR, J.

1. Leave granted.
2. The instant appeal is filed by the appellant wife being not satisfied with the order of the High Court of Madras in CMA Nos.543 and 933 of 2010 and M.P. No.1 of 2010 and M.P. No.1 of 2011 in the above mentioned CMAs.
3. The appellant and the respondent were wife and husband. Their marriage took place in 1986. It is an unfortunate case where the relationship between the appellant and respondent ran into trouble. There are three grown up children out of the said wedlock.
4. In the year 2004, the respondent husband filed FCOP No.571 of 2004 before the IInd Additional Family Court at Chennai seeking divorce from the appellant on the ground of cruelty. The said FCOP was allowed on 3.11.2009. But both the parties carried the appeals No.544 and 932 of 2010. Both the appeals were disposed of by a common order dated 25.1.2011. The appellate decree insofar it is relevant for our purpose reads thus: 2. That the Judge and Decree of Court below in respect of clause (1) i.e., the marriage dissolved by the decree of divorce on the ground of cruelty be and hereby is set aside and the marriage is dissolved based on the ~no objection™

endorsement made by petitioner in the petition.

5. The children of the parties filed Suit No.677 of 2004 before the High Court of Madras for partition of the plaint scheduled property.

6. From the impugned order it can be seen that there are thirteen items in the partition suit referred to above. According to the respondent, some of these items are already sold off. Admittedly, even according to the respondent the family has been maintaining five vehicles.

7. The partition suit is still pending after a decade. During the pendency of the abovementioned two proceedings, innumerable interlocutory applications came to be filed by various parties. It may not be necessary and profitable to describe all the proceedings.

8. The appellant moved an interlocutory application under Section 24 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 for grant of interim maintenance in the divorce original petition filed by the husband. The said Interlocutory Application No.3475 of 2004 was dismissed by the Family Court on 3.2.2007. Against the said order, the appellant herein filed a Civil Revision being CRP (PO) No.1168 of 2007 before the High Court of Madras which was disposed of by an order dated 15.10.2008. The relevant portion of the order is as follows:

5. In the result, this Civil Revision Petition is disposed of with a direction to the IInd Additional Judge, Family court, Chennai to dispose of the divorce petition along with application for permanent alimony, that would be filed by the petitioner herein/wife and also the arrears of maintenance on the basis of the details that would be filed by her, within the period stipulated by the HonTMble 1st Bench of this court, while disposing of the OSA No.179 of 2008 on 14.07.06.

9. Pursuant to the said direction of the High Court, the appellant herein filed another Interlocutory Application No.409 of 2009 in the Original Petition No.571 of 2004 referred to above seeking permanent alimony of Rs.1 lakh per month. The said interlocutory application came to be disposed of by an order dated 3.11.2009 by the IInd Additional Family Court, Chennai granting an amount of Rs.24 lakhs as

permanent alimony.

10. Aggrieved by the said order, the respondent husband herein carried the matter in appeal (by CMA No.543 of 2010) to the High Court. Not satisfied with the amount granted, the appellant wife also carried the matter in appeal (by CMA No.933 of 2010) before the High Court. Both these matters came to be disposed of by the impugned order. The operative portion of the impugned order reads as under:

36. Since the appellant is having three children, in the event of vacating the existing premises, if she takes on lease at least a three bed room flat in a decent locality, she would have to spend at least Rs.25,000/- per month, apart from the other expenses. But the appellant is occupying the respondent house. Since, the appellant had submitted that her first daughter is employed, she would also be earning. The appellant, as pointed out above is having two properties at Injambakkam and sea Shore town worth about Rs.2 crores. Taking into consideration all these aspects, we are of the considered view that the appellant may require at least Rs.40,000/- per month to meet the expenses. For getting Rs.40,000/- per month as return she may have to invest Rs.40,00,000/-. The Family court awarded a sum of Rs.24,00,000/- as permanent alimony. Considering the present cost of living, we are of the considered view that the permanent alimony awarded by the IInd Additional Family Court, Chennai is on the lower side and the same should be increased to Rs.40,00,000/-. Accordingly, the permanent alimony awarded by the Family Court is increased to Rs.40,00,000/-.

37. Therefore, the fair and final order of the Family Court passed in IA No.409 of 2009 in H.M.O.P. No.571 of 2004 on the file of the IInd Additional Family Court, Chennai is modified by awarding Rs.40,00,000/- (Rupees Forty Lacs only) as permanent alimony to the appellant/petitioner.

38. In the result, C.M.A. No.933 of 2010 is partly allowed and C.M.A. No.543 of 2010 stands dismissed. M.P. (MD) No.1 of 2011 in CMA No.543 of 2010 is dismissed and M.P. (MD) No.1 of 2010 is closed. No costs.

11. Aggrieved by the said order the respondent herein carried the matter to this Court in SLP Nos. 2506-2507 of 2012 which was dismissed by an order of this Court on

30.01.2012. Thereafter, the respondent deposited the amount of Rs.40 lakhs and the same is recorded by this Court vide order dated 26.11.2013. Therefore, the finding of the High Court, while determining the question of permanent alimony of the appellant, that the appellant requires the amount of Rs.40,000/- per month has become final. The issue in the instant appeal is limited. The appellant has prayed that having regard to the fluctuating rate of interest on fixed deposits, the amount of Rs.40 lakhs will not constantly fetch an interest of Rs.40,000/- per month, an appropriate order be passed to ensure that she gets a monthly sum of Rs.40,000/- towards her maintenance.

12. We have heard the learned counsel for the respondent.

13. In the facts and circumstances of the case, we find justification in the demand made by the appellant. We, therefore, direct the respondent to pay another Rs.15,00,000/- (rupees fifteen lakhs) to the appellant wife towards permanent alimony within a period of thirty days from today.

14. The appeals are accordingly disposed of with no order as to costs.

JUDGMENT

After the order is pronounced, a prayer is made by Mr. Ankur Saigal, learned counsel appearing for the respondent husband that the respondent be given a period of two months to comply with the direction given today. We, therefore, direct the husband to make the payment within a period of 8 weeks from today instead of 30 days, as directed in the judgment.