Exh - 894

IN THE COURT OF HON'BLE CHIEF JUDICIAL MAGISTRATE, WARDHA.

CRIMINAL APPLN. NO. OF 2025

In Reg. Cr. Case. No. 573/ 2002

APPLICANT: Sanjay Hariram Agarwal,

aged about 60 years, r/o 7 Hari Sava Street

Kidderpore, Kolkata – 700023.

-V/s-

NON-APPLICANT: State of Maharashtra.

Through P.S.O. of P.S Wardha (City)

District: Wardha

APPLICATION U/S 216 OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE 1973 / U/S 239 OF THE BHARATIYA NAGARIK SURAKSHA SANHITA, 2023.

The applicant most humbly and respectfully submits as under;

1. The present application arises in a background where the trial from its very inception, has suffered from legal infirmities so fundamental that continuing the trial without rectification would amount to perpetuating a miscarriage of justice. The charges as framed are legally incompatible, the very nature of the dispute is civil and not criminal, and the accused was denied a proper opportunity to point out these defects before the charges were framed. The cumulative prejudice caused demands immediate judicial intervention.
2. That the Hon'ble Supreme Court, in a recent and strong disapproval of judicial approach towards criminal cases arising from commercial disputes, observed in M/s Shikhar Chemicals v. State of U.P., SLP (Crl.) No. 11445/2025, order dated 04.08.2025 [**Annexure-A**]:

"The Magistrate unfortunately remained unmindful of the fact that even as per the complainant's own say the case is one of sale of goods and recovery of some balance amount... It was expected of the Additional CJM to know that in a case of sale transaction where is the question of

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any entrustment of goods so as to bring the case within the ambit of criminal breach of trust punishable under Section 406 of the IPC. ... We are not taken by surprise with the Magistrate exhibiting complete ignorance of law... However, we expected at least the High Court to understand the fine distinction between the two offences... It was expected of the High Court to know the well-settled position of law that in cases of civil dispute a complainant cannot be permitted to resort to criminal proceedings as the same would amount to abuse of process of law."

3. That the present criminal proceedings arise out of a set of commercial transactions between M/s Home Trade Ltd. (hereinafter "HTL") and Wardha District Central Co-operative Bank (hereinafter "The Bank"), pertaining to purchase and sale of Government Securities during the year 2001–2002.
4. That the prosecution case as exhibited from the documents, in brief, is that there are a few Principal-to-Principal sale and purchase transactions between HTL and the Bank between 2001 to 2002. That in April 2002, allegedly two cheques issued by HTL to the sum of Rs. 28,03,27,270/- towards sale proceeds to the bank were dishonoured, which led to the lodging of FIR No. 110/2002 under Sections 406, 420 read with Section 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.
5. That the Applicant herein was, at the relevant time, one of the directors of HTL. The gravamen of the allegations is limited to the said transactions and the alleged non-payment of amounts claimed to be allegedly due .
6. Through an order dated 20.09.2012, **[Annexure-B]** charges were framed against the Petitioner under Sections 406, 420 read with Section 34 of the IPC, along with other accused persons. The charges were framed without any pre-charge hearing under Section 239 CrPC as can be seen from the charge framing order and Roznama for that day **[Annexure-C]**, and without affording the Applicant any opportunity to demonstrate that the allegations, even if taken at face value, do not make out the offences alleged.
7. **That the charges framed on 20.09.2012 under Sections 406 and 420 IPC are legally antithetical and cannot co-exist, thereby violating the most basic principles of criminal jurisprudence and causing irreparable prejudice to the Applicant from the very inception of the trial and has led to complete failure of justice.**

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8. That Section 420 IPC requires proof of dishonest intention at the inception of the transaction, i.e., when inducing the delivery of property through deceit. Conversely, Section 406 IPC applies when property is lawfully entrusted to the accused, who subsequently develops a dishonest intention and misappropriates it. These two offences cannot arise from the same act or transaction as they are antithetical to each other.

9. That the Hon'ble Supreme Court has repeatedly and emphatically cautioned against such casual and legally untenable approach by courts. Recently, in ***M/s Shikhar Chemicals v. State of U.P., SLP (Crl.) No. 11445/2025, order dated 04.08.2025***, **[Annexure-A]** the Court observed with concern:

> *"This very Bench in a very recent pronouncement in the case of "Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd. and Others v. State of U.P. and Another", reported in (2024) 10 SCC 690 has exhaustively explained what constitutes criminal breach of trust. However, it appears that the judgment was not looked into so as to understand what constitutes criminal breach of trust punishable under Section 406 of the IPC."*

10. In the said **Delhi Race Club Ltd. v. State of U.P. [(2024) 10 SCC 690] [Annexure-D]**, the Supreme Court explicitly clarified this distinction, holding: "*For cheating, criminal intention is necessary at the time of making a false or misleading representation i.e. since inception. In criminal breach of trust, mere proof of entrustment is sufficient... Both the offences cannot co-exist simultaneously.*" The Court further observed that

> *"Before we close this matter, we would like to say something as regards the casual approach of the courts below in cases like the one at hand. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) was the official Criminal Code in the Republic of India inherited from the British India after independence. The IPC came into force in the sub-continent during the British rule in 1862. The IPC remained in force for almost a period of 162 years until it was repealed and replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita ("BNS") in December 2023 which came into effect on 1st July 2024.* ***It is indeed very sad to note that even after these many years, the courts have not been able to understand the fine distinction between criminal breach of trust and cheating.***
>
> *When dealing with a private complaint, the law enjoins upon the magistrate a duty to meticulously examine the contents of the complaint so as to*

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determine whether the offence of cheating or criminal breach of trust as the case may be is made out from the averments made in the complaint. The magistrate must carefully apply its mind to ascertain whether the allegations, as stated, genuinely constitute these specific offences. In contrast, when a case arises from a FIR, this responsibility is of the police – to thoroughly ascertain whether the allegations levelled by the informant indeed falls under the category of cheating or criminal breach of trust. ***Unfortunately, it has become a common practice for the police officers to routinely and mechanically proceed to register an FIR for both the offences i.e. criminal breach of trust and cheating on a mere allegation of some dishonesty or fraud, without any proper application of mind.***

It is high time that the police officers across the country are imparted proper training in law so as to understand the fine distinction between the offence of cheating viz-a-viz criminal breach of trust. Both offences are independent and distinct. ***The two offences cannot coexist simultaneously in the same set of facts. They are antithetical to each other. The two provisions of the IPC (now BNS, 2023) are not twins that they cannot survive without each other.***"

11. Despite this well-settled legal position existing even before the ***Delhi Race Club judgment***, the court framed charges under both Sections 406 and 420 IPC as co-existing. The failure to provide the accused an opportunity to be heard under Section 239 Cr.P.C. before framing these mutually exclusive charges exacerbated the prejudice caused. Had a hearing been granted, the accused could have highlighted the legal incongruity of the charges, potentially preventing this procedural error.

12. The framing of such antithetical charges violates the principles of criminal jurisprudence and undermines the accused's ability to prepare a coherent defence, thereby infringing upon the right to a fair trial guaranteed under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. The concurrent framing of these incompatible charges, without affording the accused an opportunity to challenge them, constitutes a cumulative miscarriage and failure of justice, warranting the present application.

13. **The charges were framed without any pre-charge hearing under Section 239 CrPC, and without affording the Applicant any opportunity to demonstrate that the allegations, even if taken at face value, do not make out the offences alleged.**

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14. That the absence of a hearing was not a mere technicality but a substantive failure. In ***Bharat Uttam Rajurkar & Ors. v. State of Maharashtra [Criminal Writ Petition No. 1232 of 2017, Bombay High Court (Nagpur Bench)]*** **[Annexure-E]**, the court addressed a similar lapse where the trial court assumed compliance with Section 239 Cr.P.C. merely because the accused was represented by counsel. Justice S.B. Shukre, quashing the charges, held: "*There cannot be any 'prima facie presumption' about the predecessor of the learned Magistrate having heard the accused persons before framing of the charge... Framing of charge is a serious business. When Sections 239 and 240 of Cr.P.C. mandate that charge must be framed after giving an opportunity of hearing to the accused, the mandate must be followed realistically and not presumptively.*" The court in the above case further observed: "*The impugned orders clearly show that no such opportunity of being heard was ever granted to the petitioners before framing of the charge and, therefore, for this reason alone, the charge, as framed, against the petitioners deserves to be quashed and set aside.*" Thus, the failure to comply with Sections 239 and 240 Cr.P.C. has in itself resulted in a miscarriage of justice, warranting the present application.

15. **Even otherwise, the present dispute is civil in nature and has been given a criminal colour, amounting to an abuse of process of law.**

16. That a perusal of the prosecution's case, including the FIR, charge-sheet and the witness depositions, demonstrates that the underlying transactions were commercial in nature involving purchase and sale of Government Securities, settlement of trades, payment of interest, and issuance of cheques for amounts allegedly due.

17. The allegations, even if taken at their highest, at best make out a claim for recovery of money, which is enforceable through civil remedies and not through prosecution under the penal code.

18. That the Hon'ble Supreme Court has repeatedly cautioned that criminal law should not be used to settle scores in commercial disputes. Recently in ***M/s Shikhar Chemicals v. State of U.P., SLP (Crl.) No. 11445/2025*** **[Annexure-A]**, order dated 04.08.2025, **the Court strongly deprecated the practice of allowing prosecution of civil disputes under the guise of criminal charges.** In this case, the complainant, a yarn trader, alleged that the accused's firm purchased yarn worth ₹52.34 lakhs, paid ₹47.75 lakhs, and failed to pay the balance of ₹4.59 lakhs. The complainant, instead of filing a civil recovery suit, lodged a private criminal complaint. The Magistrate, after inquiry under Section 202 Cr.P.C., took cognizance only under Section 406 IPC. The accused's

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petition under Section 482 Cr.P.C. for quashing was rejected by the Allahabad High Court. The Hon'ble Supreme Court came down strongly on the High Court and the trial court for allowing a civil dispute to be prosecuted criminally. The Bench observed that:

> *"**The Magistrate unfortunately remained unmindful of the fact that even as per the complainant's own say the case is one of sale of goods and recovery of some balance amount. It was expected of the Additional CJM to know that in a case of sale transaction where is the question of any entrustment of goods so as to bring the case within the ambit of criminal breach of trust punishable under Section 406 of the IPC.** This position of law came to be explained by this Court almost six decades back in the landmark decision titled "State of Gujarat vs. Jaswantlal Nathalal" reported in 1968 (2) SCR 408, wherein this Court stated that a mere transaction of sale cannot amount to an entrustment." ...*
>
> *"**We are not taken by surprise with the Magistrate exhibiting complete ignorance of law as regards the position of law, as to what constitutes cheating punishable under Section 420 of the IPC and criminal breach of trust punishable under Section 406 of the IPC. However,** we expected at least the High Court to understand the fine distinction between the two offences and the necessary ingredients to constitute the offence of cheating and criminal breach of trust.** This very Bench in a very recent pronouncement in the case of "Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd. and Others v. State of U.P. and Another", reported in (2024) 10 SCC 690 has exhaustively explained what constitutes criminal breach of trust. However, it appears that the judgment was not looked into so as to understand what constitutes criminal breach of trust punishable under Section 406 of the IPC." ...*
>
> *"**It was expected of the High Court to know the well-settled position of law that in cases of civil dispute a complainant cannot be permitted to resort to criminal proceedings as the same would amount to abuse of process of law. It was expected of the High Court to understand the nature of the allegations levelled in the complaint. In substance the High Court has said in so many words that the criminal proceedings instituted by the complainant in a case of pure civil dispute is justified because it may take considerable time for the complainant to recover***

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the balance amount by preferring a civil suit. *In such circumstances referred to above we are left with no other option but to set aside the order of the High Court even without issuing notice to the respondents."*

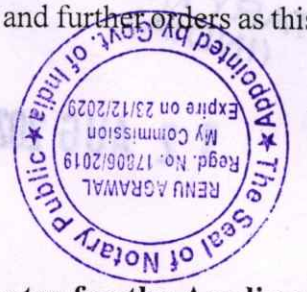
19. That in the present case, continuing the trial on the basis of allegations which, on their own showing, arise from a commercial dispute amounts to permitting the abuse of criminal process, contrary to the law laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, and causes irreparable prejudice to the Applicant.
20. That this case is the very kind that the Hon'ble Supreme Court has repeatedly warned against, the casual framing of mutually exclusive charges, the criminalization of purely civil disputes, and the denial of fundamental procedural safeguards. Each of these infirmities, individually grave, have compounded towards serious and irreparable prejudice to the Applicant and has led to failure of justice.
21. That continuing with the present charges would perpetuate the abuse of criminal process and cause further irreparable prejudice to the Applicant. The matter requires immediate correction to prevent further miscarriage of justice.
22. The applicant craves leave to add, amend or modify the submissions including submission of additional documents if required.

PRAYER

In view of the above, it is most respectfully prayed that this Hon'ble Court may be pleased to

a) Drop/alter the antithetical and unsustainable charges framed both under Sections 406 and 420 IPC; and
b) Direct that the trial may recommence only after amending the charges in accordance with law, after affording an opportunity to the Applicant, keeping in view the binding precedents of the Hon'ble Supreme Court prohibiting the simultaneous framing of such mutually exclusive charges and the settled principle that purely civil disputes cannot be given a criminal colour; and

Pass such other and further orders as this Hon'ble Court may deem fit and proper in the interests of justice.



Dated this 12th day of August, 2025.

For the advocates for the Applicant

For the Applicant

SOLEMN AFFIRMATION

I **SANJAY HARIRAM AGARWAL**, aged about 60 years, Occupation: BUSINESS, residing at 7 Hari Sava Street, Kidderpore, Kolkata – 700023., above named Applicant do hereby state on solemn affirmation that the contents of above paras of affidavit are true and correct to my personal knowledge and belief and have been drafted by my counsel on my instruction and have been explained to me in vernacular and have been found to be true and correct. Hence verified and signed on this **12th Day of AUGUST, 2025** at Delhi.

S. Agarwal

DEPONENT

I know and identify the deponent

12 AUG 2025

(ADVOCATE)

I identified the deponant who has signed in my presence

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Certified That The Deponent
Shri / Smt. /Km. ...
S/o, W/o ...
Identified by ... has Solemnly
affirmed before me ... as
Sl. No. 1114/2025 ... Book-2025
Which have been read & explained to him are true
connect to his knowledge

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Annexure – A

2025 SCC OnLine SC 1643

In the Supreme Court of India

(BEFORE J.B. PARDIWALA AND R. MAHADEVAN, JJ.)

Shikhar Chemicals ... Petitioner(s);

Versus

State of Uttar Pradesh and Another ... Respondent (s).

Petition for Special Leave to Appeal (Crl.) No. 11445 of 2025

Decided on August 4, 2025

Advocates who appeared in this case:

Mr. Surjadipta Seth, Adv., Mr. Arindam Ghosh, AOR, For Petitioner(s)

ORDER

1. This petition arises from the order passed by the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad (Coram of Prashant Kumar, J.) in Criminal Miscellaneous Application No. 2507/2024 dated 05.05.2025 by which the application filed by the petitioner herein seeking quashing of the proceedings of Complaint Case no. 113283 of 2023 pending in the Court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate-I, Kanpur Nagar came to be rejected.

2. With all due deference and humility at our command, we are constrained to observe that the impugned order is one of the worst and most erroneous orders that we have come across in our respective tenures as judges of this Court.

3. The judge concerned has not only cut a sorry figure for himself but has made a mockery of justice. We are at our wits' end" to understand what is wrong with the Indian Judiciary at the level of High Court. At times we are left wondering whether such orders are passed on some extraneous considerations or it is sheer ignorance of law. Whatever it be, passing of such absurd and erroneous orders is something unpardonable.

4. It all started with a private complaint lodged by the respondent no. 2 herein in the Court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate-I, Kanpur Nagar, which came to be registered as Complaint Case No. 113283 of 2023. The complaint reads thus:

> *"1. That the complainant is engaged in the wholesale and retail business of yarn (thread) used in fabric manufacturing, through his firm M/s Lalita Textile Concern. The respondent, through her firm M/s Shikhar Chemicals, is involved in the business of manufacturing and selling cloth made from yarn supplied by the*

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complainant.

2. *That since both parties are in the same trade, they have had business relations for the past 4-5 years. In this regard, the complainant, through his firm, supplied goods (yarn) to the respondent's firm worth a total of Rs. 52,34,385/- (Fifty-two lakhs thirty-four thousand three hundred eighty-five only) between April 2019 and July 2019, against various attached tax invoices. Out of this, the respondent paid Rs. 47,75,000/- (Forty-seven lakhs seventy-five thousand only) through RTGS transfers. (Statement of account showing received and outstanding amounts is attached.) A balance of Rs. 4,59,385/- (Four lakhs fifty-nine thousand three hundred eighty-five only) has remained unpaid since August 2019. As per Yarn Committee and market regulations, interest at the rate of 8% is payable on the outstanding amount if not cleared within 15 days. Till the date of filing this application, an additional amount of Rs. 7,23,711/- has become due as interest, which is also recoverable from the respondent.*
3. *That the complainant attempted to contact the respondent several times via phone for the outstanding payment, but the respondent failed to make any payment. The complainant submitted a complaint to the concerned Deputy Commissioner of the GST Zone/Range/Sector. The GST department issued notices seeking explanation from the respondent, but she failed to respond or provide any clarification. Subsequently, another legal notice was issued under Section DRC-501A of GST Act, but the respondent again did not respond. The department, through proper legal process, imposed a penalty on the respondent for fraudulently availing tax benefits. The action was taken under Section 73(9) of the Act on 19/04/2023, as per information received by the complainant under RTI (copy enclosed).*
4. *That the complainant, through his advocate, sent a legal notice to the respondent, which was returned undelivered from all addresses (Factory/Home/Office) with the remark that the premises were locked. All notices were sent to addresses registered with the GST department. These events made the complainant reasonably believe that the respondent has absconded after fraudulently obtaining goods and financial benefits. (Returned notices with postal documents are enclosed.)*
5. *That the complainant again sent a legal notice through his advocate to all GST-registered addresses of the respondent (Factory/Home/Office) for recovery of dues and to initiate criminal proceedings for the fraud. The notice sent to 127/536 W-2, Damodar Nagar was returned with the remark "no one found," and*

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the notice sent to E-52, Site No. 1, Industrial Area, Dahi Chowki, Unnao was returned with the remark "refused to accept." (Copy of postal refusal is enclosed.)

6. *That the complainant submitted written complaints to the Station Officer, P.S. Badshahi Naka, and the Police Commissioner, requesting registration of FIR against the respondent under applicable sections for fraud, cheating, and criminal conspiracy. However, no FIR was registered. (Copies of the complaint applications are enclosed.)*
7. *That the GST department has already found the respondent guilty under Section 73(9) of the GST Act and penalized her accordingly. Hence, there is no further doubt about the criminal conduct of the respondent, as established by facts and evidence mentioned herein. Therefore, it is just and proper that this Hon'ble Court may take cognizance of the matter, summon the accused, and punish her as per law."*

(Emphasis supplied)

5. The statement of the complainant recorded by the Magistrate upon verification reads thus:

1. *That I am the proprietor and authorized signatory of the complainant firm mentioned in the complaint and have full knowledge of the facts stated in this affidavit.*
2. *That I, through my firm M/s Lalita Textile Concern, am engaged in the wholesale and retail trade of yarn (used in the textile industry). The opposite party, through their firm M/s Shikhar Chemicals, carries on the business of manufacturing and selling fabric using the yarn supplied by my firm.*
3. *That since both our businesses are interrelated, I have been engaged in business transactions with the opposite party for the past 4-5 years. Between April 2019 and July 2019, yarn worth Rs. 52,34,385/- (Rupees Fifty-Two Lakhs Thirty-Four Thousand Three Hundred Eighty-Five only) was supplied to the opposite party on order, through multiple Tax Invoices. Against this supply, the opposite party made a total payment of Rs. 47,75,000/- (Rupees Forty-Seven Lakhs Seventy-Five Thousand only) via RTGS. A balance of Rs. 4,59,385/-(Rupees Four Lakhs Fifty-Nine Thousand Three Hundred Eighty-Five only) has remained unpaid since August 2019. As per the Yarn Committee and market regulations, if payment is not made within 15 days, 8% interest becomes applicable on the outstanding amount. Accordingly, as of the date of filing this complaint/petition, the total outstanding amount including interest stands at Rs. 7,23,711/-, which is yet to be received by me from the opposite party.*

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4. *That I made several attempts to contact the opposite party telephonically for payment, but no amount was paid. A formal complaint was made to the Deputy Commissioner of the concerned GST Zone/Range/Sector. The GST department issued notices to the opposite party seeking clarification. However, no response or clarification was provided by them. The department again issued a notice under GST Section 501A for legal action, which was also ignored. Subsequently, the department penalized the opposite party for dishonestly and fraudulently availing tax benefits from my business. Based on my RTI application, the GST Department, in its reply dated 12.06.2023, confirmed that action was taken against the opposite party under Section 73(9) of the GST Act on 19.04.2023. (Copy enclosed).*
5. *That I also served a legal notice to the opposite party through my advocate, but all notices sent to the factory/home/office addresses were returned with remarks such as "Premises Locked." These notices were sent to addresses registered with the GST Department. After this entire process, I firmly believe that the opposite party has intentionally defrauded me by dishonestly benefiting from the business and has now absconded. (All claim notices along with postal tracking documents are annexed.)*
6. *That again, through my advocate, I sent recovery notices and legal notices for initiating criminal action for fraud and cheating. These were sent to both GST- registered addresses of the opposite party (factory/home/office). The notice sent to home/office at 127/536 W-2 Damodar Nagar was returned with the remark "No one found," and the factory notice at E-52, Site No. 1, Industrial Area, Dahi Chowki, Unnao was returned with the remark "Refused to accept." (Returned envelopes with refusal remarks are enclosed.)*
7. *That I submitted written complaints to the SHO, Badshahi Naka Police Station, and the Commissioner of Police requesting registration of FIR under relevant sections for fraud, cheating, and criminal conspiracy against the opposite party, but no FIR was registered. (Copies of complaints enclosed.)*

(Emphasis supplied)

6. Thus, the Magistrate thought fit to take cognizance upon the complaint but at the same time postponed the issue of process, as he thought fit to initiate magisterial inquiry under Section 202 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (for short "the Cr. P.C."). At the end of the magisterial inquiry, the court concerned thought fit to issue process only for the offence punishable under Section 406 of the IPC i.e. criminal breach of trust.

7. We may reproduce some part of the order passed by the

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Magistrate while issuing process:—

"Upon perusal of the file, it is evident that both the complainant and the accused are businesspersons. As per the complainant's statement, goods worth Rs. 52,34,385/- were supplied to the accused between April and July 2019, of which Rs. 47,75,000/- was paid, and Rs. 4,59,385/- remained unpaid since August 2019. According to market regulations of the Yarn Committee, if payment is not made within 15 days, 8% interest is applicable on the outstanding amount, which totals Rs. 7,23,711/-, and remains unpaid. The complainant, in his statement under Section 200 Cr. P.C., also stated that Rs. 7,23,711/- is still due from the accused. The witnesses under Section 202 Cr. P.C. corroborated the same. The complainant has submitted relevant invoices, bank statements, etc., in support. From the statements under Sections 200 and 202 Cr. P.C., a prima facie case under Section 406 IPC appears to be made out against Mrs. Kumkum Pandey, Proprietor of M/s Shikhar Chemicals. Hence, this case is fit for cognizance and summoning.

Order:

The accused, Mrs. Kumkum Pandey, Proprietor of M/s Shikhar Chemicals, is summoned for trial under Section 406 IPC. The complainant is directed to pursue the case within a week. Let the accused appear in court on 15.12.2023.

(Emphasis supplied)

8. *The aforesaid Order* passed by the Magistrate came to be challenged before the High Court under Section 482 of the Cr. P.C.

9. The High Court rejected the application.

10. In such circumstances, the petitioner is here before this Court with the present petition.

11. The case of the respondent no. 2 as a complainant, is plain and simple. He claims to be an unpaid seller. According to him, he delivered goods in the form of thread to the petitioner herein worth Rs. 52,34,385/- out of which an amount of Rs. 47,75,000/- came to be paid to the complainant by the petitioner herein, however, the balance amount has not been paid, till this date.

12. It is for the recovery of the balance amount that he thought fit to file a criminal complaint and institute criminal proceedings. It appears that the complainant in the first instance tried to lodge a FIR but the police declined to register the FIR saying that it was purely a civil dispute.

13. The Magistrate unfortunately remained unmindful of the fact that even as per the complainant's own say the case is one of sale of goods and recovery of some balance amount.

14. It was expected of the Additional CJM to know that in a case of

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sale transaction where is the question of any entrustment of goods so as to bring the case within the ambit of criminal breach of trust punishable under Section 406 of the IPC. This position of law came to be explained by this Court almost six decades back in the landmark decision titled "*State of Gujarat* v. *Jaswantlal Nathalal*", (1968) 2 SCR 408, wherein this Court stated that a mere transaction of sale cannot amount to an entrustment. We quote the relevant observations made by this Court as under:—

> *"8. The term "entrusted" found in Section 405 IPC governs not only the words "with the property" immediately following it but also the words "or with any dominion over the property" occurring thereafter — see* Velji Raghvaji Patel *v.* State of Maharashtra, *[(1965) 2 SCR 429]. Before there can be any entrustment there must be a trust meaning thereby an obligation annexed to the ownership of property and a confidence reposed in and accepted by the owner or declared and accepted by him for the benefit of another or of another and the owner. But that does not mean that such an entrustment need conform to all the technicalities of the law of trust — see* Jaswantrai Manilal Akhaney *v.* State of Bombay, *[1956 SCR 483, 498500]. The expression "entrustment" carries with it the implication that the person handing over any property or on whose behalf that property is handed over to another, continues to be its owner. Further the person handing over the property must have confidence in the person taking the property so as to create a fiduciary relationship between them. A mere transaction of sale cannot amount to an entrustment. It is true that the Government had sold the cement in question to BSS solely for the purpose of being used in connection with the construction work referred to earlier. But that circumstance does not make the transaction in question anything other than a sale. After delivery of the cement, the Government had neither any right nor dominion over it. If the purchaser or his representative had failed to comply with the requirements of any law relating to cement control, he should have been prosecuted for the same. But we are unable to hold that there was any breach of trust.*
>
> *9. A case somewhat similar to the one before us came up for consideration before a Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court in* Satyendra Nath Mukherji *v.* Emperor, *[ILR (1947) 1 Cal 97]. These are the facts of that case. One Satya Sunder Mitra was a contractor. He was granted a permit by the Executive Engineer, A.R.P. (Shelters), construction division, to purchase seven tons of cement from Balmer Lawrie and Company. The permit was granted on the condition that the cement was to be used in the work connected with the construction of shelters, which work he had contracted to do for*

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the Executive Engineer. The finding in the case was that with the help of an employee of Mitra and Chaudhuri who were banians of Balmer Lawrie and Company, six tons of cement were diverted and disposed of for another purpose. The trial court convicted Satya Sunder Mitra under Section 406 IPC and another for abetting the offence committed by Satya Sunder Mitra. The High Court allowed their appeal, holding that there was no entrustment of the cement in question within the meaning of the term as used in Section 405 of Penal Code, 1860. In the course of the judgment it was observed:

> *"The permit was granted in accordance with the system of control established under the Defence of India Rules, under which an order has been issued by the Government of India preventing selling agents such as Balmer Lawrie and Company from delivering any cement except under instructions from the Government or from the Cement Adviser. The transaction, so far as the contractor is concerned, was one of purchase and the property in the cement clearly passed to him. No doubt he could not have obtained the permit through the Executive Engineer if it had not been intended that the cement should be used for the purpose directed by the Engineer, but, in our opinion, in no sense can it be said that there was any entrustment either of the property or of any dominion over the property."*

We are of the opinion that the legal position is as explained in that decision.

10. The decision of the Kings Bench Division in King *v.* Grubb, *[[1915] 2 K.B. 683] relied on by Mr. Dhebar learned counsel for the appellant does not bear on the question under consideration. Therein, the factum of entrustment was not in dispute. The only question of law that arose for decision in that case was whether when a property is entrusted to a company, and the person directing and controlling the company, by whose instructions the property had passed into the possession of the company, had converted the same fraudulently, that person can be said to have committed an offence under Section 1 of the Larceny Act, 1901. The court answered that question in the affirmative.*

11. In view of our conclusion that the prosecution has failed to prove the entrustment pleaded, it is unnecessary to consider whether on the material on record it can be concluded that the respondent had misappropriated 40 bags of cement referred to earlier."

(Emphasis supplied)

15. We are not taken by surprise with the Magistrate exhibiting complete ignorance of law as regards the position of law, as to what constitutes cheating punishable under Section 420 of the IPC and

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criminal breach of trust punishable under Section 406 of the IPC. However, we expected at least the High Court to understand the fine distinction between the two offences and the necessary ingredients to constitute the offence of cheating and criminal breach of trust.

16. This very Bench in a very recent pronouncement in the case of "*Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd.* v. *State of U.P.*", (2024) 10 SCC 690 has exhaustively explained what constitutes criminal breach of trust. However, it appears that the judgment was not looked into so as to understand what constitutes criminal breach of trust punishable under Section 406 of the IPC.

17. The most disturbing part of this matter is the manner in which the High Court dealt with the quashing application filed by the petitioner-herein and the observations made in para 12 of its impugned order.

18. We quote the paragraph 12 as under:—

> "12. o.p. no. 2 appears to be a very small business firm and for him, the aforesaid amount along with interest is a huge amount. In case, subject to filing civil suit, O.P. no. 2 will not be in position to pursue the civil litigation. In case, O.P. no. 2 files a civil suit firstly, it will take years for it to see any ray of hope and secondly, he will have to put more money to pursue the litigation. To be more precise it would seem like good money chasing bad money. If this Court allows the matter to be referred to civil court on account of civil dispute between the parties, it would amount to travesty of justice and O.P. no. 2 would suffer irreparable loss and he might even not be in a position to emerge from the financial constraints to pursue the matter."

(Emphasis supplied)

19. The Judge has gone to the extent of saying that asking the complainant to pursue civil remedy for the purpose of recovery of the balance amount will be very unreasonable as civil suit may take a long time before it is decided and, therefore, the complainant should be permitted to institute criminal proceedings for the purpose of recovery of the balance amount.

20. Is it the understanding of the High Court that ultimately if the accused is convicted, the trial court would award him the balance amount? The observations recorded in para 12 are shocking. It is an extremely sad day for one and all to read the observations contained in para 12 of the impugned order. It was expected of the High Court to know the well-settled position of law that in cases of civil dispute a complainant cannot be permitted to resort to criminal proceedings as the same would amount to abuse of process of law. It was expected of the High Court to understand the nature of the allegations levelled in

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the complaint. In substance the High Court has said in so many words that the criminal proceedings instituted by the complainant in a case of pure civil dispute is justified because it may take considerable time for the complainant to recover the balance amount by preferring a civil suit.

21. In such circumstances referred to above we are left with no other option but to set aside the order of the High Court even without issuing notice to the respondents.

22. In the result, we partly allow this petition and set aside the impugned order passed by the High Court. We remand the matter to the High Court for fresh consideration of the Criminal Miscellaneous Application No. 2507 of 2024. The quashing petition shall be reheard on its own merits keeping in mind the dictum laid in the two decisions of this Court referred to above.

23. We request the Hon'ble the Chief Justice of the High Court of Allahabad to assign this matter to any other Judge of the High Court as he may deem fit.

24. The Chief Justice of High Court shall immediately withdraw the present criminal determination from the concerned Judge.

25. The Chief Justice shall make the concerned judge sit in a Division Bench with a seasoned senior judge of the High Court.

26. We further direct that the concerned judge shall not be assigned any criminal determination, till he demits office. If at all at some point of time, he is to be made to sit as a single judge, he shall not be assigned any criminal determination.

27. We have been constrained to issue directions as contained in Paras 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 respectively, referred to above, keeping in mind that the impugned order is not the only erroneous order of the concerned Judge that we have looked into for the first time. Many such erroneous orders have been looked into by us over a period of time.

28. Registry to forward one copy of this order to Hon'ble the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court at the earliest.

29. Pending application(s), if any, stands disposed of.

SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Petition for Special Leave to Appeal (Crl.) No. 11445/2025
[Arising out of impugned final judgment and order dated 05-05-2025 in A482 No. 2507/2024 passed by the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad]

Shikhar Chemicals.....Petitioner(s)

Versus

State of Uttar Pradesh and Another.....Respondent

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(s)

IA No. 183167/2025 - Exemption from Filing O.T.

ORDER

1. The Special Leave Petition is partly allowed in terms of the signed order.

2. The relevant part of the signed order is as under:—

"...We request the Hon'ble the Chief Justice of the High Court of Allahabad to assign this matter to any other Judge of the High Court as he may deem fit.

24. The Chief Justice of High Court shall immediately withdraw the present criminal determination from the concerned Judge.

25. The Chief Justice shall make the concerned judge sit in a Division Bench with a seasoned senior judge of the High Court.

26. We further direct that the concerned judge shall not be assigned any criminal determination, till he demits office. If at all at some point of time, he is to be made to sit as a single judge, he shall not be assigned any criminal determination.

27. We have been constrained to issue directions as contained in Paras 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 respectively, referred to above, keeping in mind that the impugned order is not the only erroneous order of the concerned Judge that we have looked into for the first time. Many such erroneous orders have been looked into by us over a period of time.

28. Registry to forward one copy of this order to Hon'ble the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court at the earliest."

3. Pending application(s), if any, stands disposed of.

———

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(12)

Annexure - B

Reg.Cri. Case No. 573/2002 **Exh. No. 358**

Charge

I, D.H.Sharma , Chief Judicial Magistrate, Wardha do hereby charge you-

1. Sanjay s/o Hariram Agrawal, aged about 40 years, r/o Kusum Apartment Sector No.17, Washi, New Mumbai
2. Subodha s/o Chandradayal Bhandari aged about 47 years, r/o R.B.-703 G Govind Complex Sector-14 Washi, New Mumbai.
4. Nandkishor s/o Shankarlal Trivedi, aged about 45 years, r/o Vileparle, Mumbai.
5. Rajan s/o Chandrashekhar Salpekar, aged about 61 years, r/o Anurag Apartment, Laxminagar, Wardha.

Abated vide Exh. 798 = 799, Dt. 02/05/23 →

6. Dilip s/o Narayanrao Kale, aged 64 years, r/o Civil Lines, Arvi.
7. Dhnyaneshwar s/o Ganpatrao Zalke, aged about 64 years, r/o Bachelor Road, Dhantoli, Wardha.
8. Madan s/o Babulalji Shrivas, aged about 53 years, r/i Shivaji Ward, Hinganghat.

797 798

Abated vide Exh. No 789 = 790 Dt. 12/10/2023

9. Vasantrao s/o Janardanrao Karlekar, aged about 76 years, r/o Nahadeopura, Wardha
11. Sau.Smitatai Vinayakrao Bhise, aged about 70 years, r/o Kelkarwadi Wardha.
12. Sharad s/o Bapurаoji Deshmukh, aged about 55 years, r/o Mhasala Sewagram Road, Wardha.
13. Kashinath s/o Daulatrao Parve, aged about 63 years, r/o Talegaon (Talatule), District Wardha.

as follows-

That you accused no.1 Sanjay being a Director, accused no.2 Subodha being a Chartered Accountant, accused no.4 Nandkishor being an Executive Director of the Home Trade Ltd. Company, or about the month of April 2002, at Wardha in furtherance of your common intention cheated the Wardha District Central Co-operative Bank, Wardha, by dishonestly inducing it to invest the amount of Rs.25,24,72,083.33 through your company to get the Government security and as per your assurance the amount was delivered to

Home Trade Ltd. by the said bank. But you neither invested the amount nor it was refunded to the bank, and thus you all thereby committed an offence punishable under section 420 r/w 34 of Indian Penal Code, and within my cognizance.

Secondly, that you accused no.5 Ranaj, accused no.6 Dilip, accused no.7 Dhnyaneshwar, accused no.8 Madan, accused no.9 Vasantrao, accused no.11 Smt.Smitabai, accused no.12 Sharad and accused no.13 Kashinath being employees/office bearers of the Wardha District Central Co-operative Bank, Wardha on or about in the month of April 2002, at Wardha you all having dominion entrustment over the amount of Rs.25,24,72,083.33 of the Bank/public in your capacity as a public servant and you all in furtherance of your common intention committed criminal breach of trust in respect of the amount of 25,24,72,083.33 so entrusted, by not investing it without proper procedure and by violating the rules of the bank or by passing a resolution which was not on Agenda of meeting and thus dishonestly invested the said amount through Home Trade Ltd., and thereby committed an offence punishable under section 409 r/w 34 of Indian Penal Code, and within my cognizance.

Thirdly, that you accused no.1 Sanjay being a Director, accused no.2 Subodh being a Chartered Accountant, accused no.4 Nandkishor being an Executive Director of the Home Trade Ltd. Company, on or about in the month of April 2002 at above mentioned period and place in furtherance of your common intention converted it to your own use, the amount of Rs.25,24,72,083.33, entrusted with your company by the said bank for the purpose of investing through your company to get the Government security and as the company failed to invest or return to bank the said amount, you all committed criminal breach of trust which is an offence punishable under section 406 r/w 34 of Indian Penal Code, and within my cognizance.

And I hereby direct that you be tried by me on the said charge.

Dated this 20th day of September, 2012

(D.H.Sharma)
Chief Judicial Magistrate,
Wardha, dt.20.09.2012

The above said charge is read over and explained to the accused persons in vernacular to which, they pleaded not guilty.

(D.H.Sharma)
Chief Judicial Magistrate,
Wardha, dt.20.09.2012

(139) Annexure-C

R.C.C.No 573/2002

शासन x संजय अग्रवाल +12

U/S 406, 409, 420 IPC

20/9/12 सरकारी वकील हजर, आरोपी क्र.1, 2 व 4 to 9 व 11 ते 13 हजर. नि.350 वर आदेश पारित

358-C त्याचा प्रोसेक्युशन व्ह... अर्ज (नामंजूर) सर्व आरोपींवर आरोप निश्चित करण्यात आले.

359 to 369-C आरोपींची जबाबी नोंदविण्यात आली कागदपत्रांच्या ... अर्ज (मंजूर)

370, 371-D आरोपींचे साक्षीदारांना समन्स काढण्यात आले. प्रकरण पुराव्या करिता ठेवण्यात येते. Received copies of the documents

आरोपी संजय अग्रवाल यांना न्यायालयीन कस्टडीमध्ये घेण्यात येते. रिमांड वॉरंट देण्यात आले. प्रकरण पुराव्या करिता तहकूब (N. C. TRIVEDI) Acc No. 20/9/12

8/10/12 मु.न्या

8/10/12 सरकारी वकील हजर, आरोपी सर्व हजर. ... 20/10/12 (SUBODH BHANDARI) 16/10/12

372 D ... आरोपी क्र. 2 ... अर्ज (अंशतः)

374 D 2 ... मागणी मिळण्याबाबत अर्ज दाखल (मंजूर) आरोपी क्र. 6, 7, 9 व 12 ... वॉरंट (निकाल)

375-D ... अर्ज (मंजूर) ... यांचा पुराव्या करिता पुढील तारीख मिळण्याबाबत अर्ज (मंजूर) ...

376-D ... अर्ज दाखल ... डिस्चार्ज करण्यात

377-D ... रिपोर्ट (अमान्य) 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11 to 13

378-C सा.क्र.1 ... यांची साक्ष नोंदविण्यात आली 7 sms

379-C ... यांचा ... समन्स (Seen & filed) ... अर्ज दाखल (मंजूर)

380-C ... प्रकरण पुराव्या करिता तहकूब आरोपी क्र. ... 19/10/12

381-D ... मु.न्या

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Annexure – D

(2024) 10 Supreme Court Cases 690 : (2025) 1 Supreme Court Cases (Cri) 281 : 2024 SCC OnLine SC 2248

In the Supreme Court of India

(BEFORE J.B. PARDIWALA AND MANOJ MISRA, JJ.)

DELHI RACE CLUB (1940) LIMITED AND OTHERS . . Appellants;

Versus

STATE OF UTTAR PRADESH AND ANOTHER . . Respondents.

Criminal Appeal No. 3114 of 2024[‡], decided on August 23, 2024

A. **Penal Code, 1860 — Ss. 406 and 420 — Criminal breach of trust and cheating — Distinction between ingredients required for constituting both offences, stated — Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 316(2) and 318(4)**

(Paras 36, 37 and 43)

S.W. Palanitkar v. *State of Bihar*, (2002) 1 SCC 241 : 2002 SCC (Cri) 129; *Harmanpreet Singh Ahluwalia* v. *State of Punjab*, (2009) 7 SCC 712 : (2009) 3 SCC (Cri) 620, *followed*

B. **Penal Code, 1860 — S. 406 — Criminal breach of trust — Applicability of — Permissibility in case of sale — Held, in case of a sale, S. 406 goes out of the picture — Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 — S. 316(2) — Contract and Specific Relief — Sale of Goods Act, 1930, Ss. 20 and 24**

(Paras 44 and 49)

Lalit Chaturvedi v. *State of U.P.*, (2024) 12 SCC 483 : 2024 SCC OnLine SC 171, *followed*

Mideast Integrated Steels Ltd. v. *State of Jharkhand*, 2023 SCC OnLine Jhar 301, *approved*

C. **Penal Code, 1860 — Ss. 406 and 420 — Breach of contract and criminal breach of trust and cheating — Distinction between, held, a fine one and same stated — Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 316(2) and 318(4)**

(Paras 41 and 42)

D. **Penal Code, 1860 — Ss. 405 and 406 — Act of breach of trust — Whether by itself may result in a penal offence of criminal breach of trust — Held, every act of breach of trust may not result in a penal offence of criminal breach of trust unless there is evidence of manipulating act of fraudulent misappropriation — Further held, an act of breach of trust involves a civil wrong in respect of which the person may seek his remedy for damages in civil courts but, any breach of trust with a mens rea, gives**

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rise to a criminal prosecution as well — Words and Phrases — "Breach of trust", "criminal breach of trust" — Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 316(1) & (4)

(Para 39)

Hari Prasad Chamaria v. *Bishun Kumar Surekha*, (1973) 2 SCC 823 : 1973 SCC (Cri) 1082, *followed*

E. **Penal Code, 1860 — S. 406 r/w Ss. 415 and 420 r/w S. 415 — Commission of offence of criminal breach of trust — Whether by itself, can be a ground for holding commission of offence of cheating — Held, if complainant claims that offence of criminal breach of trust as defined under S. 405, punishable under S. 406, is committed by the accused, then in the same breath it cannot be said that the accused also committed the offence of cheating as defined and explained in S. 415, punishable under S. 420 — Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, S. 316(2) r/w Ss. 318(1) & (4) r/w S. 318(1)**

(Para 38)

Page: 691

F. **Penal Code, 1860 — Ss. 406, 420 and 120 — Ingredients of criminal breach of trust and cheating explained and the two offences distinguished — Quashing of summoning order — Absence of requisite ingredients attracting alleged crime, as factor**

— Offence allegedly committed by Company — A-2, the Secretary and A-3 Honorary President and Non-Executive Director of the Company allegedly purchased grains from the complainant, but stopped payment for the same — Although, complaint filed for offences under Ss. 406, 420 and 120-B, the ACJM took cognizance and issued process only for offence under S. 406

— Held, summoning of an accused in a criminal case being a serious matter, summoning order must reflect that the Magistrate while issuing process applied its mind to the facts of the case and the law applicable thereto — Further, the Magistrate, held, required to examine the nature of allegations made in the complaint and the evidence both oral and documentary in support thereof

— Further held, when offence allegedly is committed by the company, vicarious liability cannot be attributed to A-2 and A-3, the office-bearers of the Company — Thus A-2 and A-3 being the office-bearers, held, could be arrayed as accused only if direct allegations are levelled against them — Further held, vicarious liability of the office-bearers would arise provided any provision exists in that behalf in the statute — Even for the said purpose, the complainant, held, required to make requisite allegations for attracting the provisions constituting vicarious liability

— Further, there held a distinction between criminal breach of trust and cheating — For cheating, criminal intention, held, necessary at the time of making a false or

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misleading representation i.e. since inception — In criminal breach of trust, mere proof of entrustment, held, sufficient — Thus, in case of criminal breach of trust, the offender, held, is lawfully entrusted with the property, and he dishonestly misappropriated the same — However, in case of cheating, the offender fraudulently or dishonestly induces a person by deceiving him to deliver any property — In such a situation, both the offences cannot co-exist simultaneously

— Indisputably there found no entrustment of any property to the appellants — Even the complainant also did not claim that any property was lawfully entrusted to the appellants and that the same dishonestly misappropriated — Complainant simply claimed non-payment of price of the goods sold by him — Held, once there is a sale, S. 406, held, goes out of picture, because there needs to be some entrustment of property to the accused wherein the ownership is not transferred to the accused — In case of sale of movable property, although the payment may be deferred yet the property in the goods passes on delivery as per Ss. 20 and 24, respectively, of the Sale of Goods Act, 1930

— Resultantly, at the most, the trial court, held, could have issued process for the offence of cheating but in any circumstances no case of criminal breach of trust is made out — Further held, even if the Magistrate would have issued process for the offence of cheating, the same would have been liable to be quashed and set aside, because none of the ingredients to constitute the offence of cheating disclosed from the materials on record

— Thus, plain reading of the complaint did not spell out any of the requisite ingredients of both offences i.e. criminal breach of trust under S. 406 and cheating under S. 420 — Further held, if complainant claims that offence of criminal breach of trust is committed by the accused, then in the same breath it cannot be said that the accused also committed the offence of cheating — Further, the complainant having claimed that a particular amount is due and payable to him, he should have filed a civil suit for recovery of the amount against the appellants — Resultantly, continuation of the criminal proceeding, held, nothing but abuse of the process of law and, therefore, prayer for quashing allowed — Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 — Ss. 316 (2) & (4) — Contract and Specific Relief — Sale of Goods Act, 1930 — Ss. 20 and 24 — Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 — Ss. 200, 202, 204 and 482 — Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 223, 225, 227 and 528

(Paras 23 to 57)

Held :

The expression "*entrusted with property*" used in Section 405 IPC connotes that the property in respect of which criminal breach of trust can be committed must necessarily be the property of some person other than the accused or that the

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beneficial interest in or ownership thereof must be in the other person and the offender must hold such property in trust for such other person or for his benefit.

(Para 47)

In case of sale of goods, the property passes to the purchaser from the seller when the goods are delivered. Once the property in the goods passes to the purchaser, it cannot be said that the purchaser was entrusted with the property of the seller. Without entrustment of property, there cannot be any criminal breach of trust. Thus, prosecution of cases on charge of criminal breach of trust, for failure to pay the consideration amount in case of sale of goods is flawed to the core. There can be civil remedy for the non-payment of the consideration amount, but no criminal case will be maintainable for it.

(Para 49)

Legal Remembrancer v. *Abani Kumar Banerji*, 1950 SCC OnLine Cal 49; *R.R. Chari* v. *State of U.P.*, 1951 SCC 250; *State of Gujarat* v. *Jaswantlal Nathalal*, 1967 SCC OnLine SC 58; *Velji Raghavji Patel* v. *State of Maharashtra*, 1964 SCC OnLine SC 185; *Jaswantrai Manilal Akhaney* v. *State of Bombay*, 1956 SCC OnLine SC 46; *CBI* v. *Duncans Agro Industries Ltd.*, (1996) 5 SCC 591 : 1996 SCC (Cri) 1045, *followed*

Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd. v. *State of U.P.*, 2024 SCC OnLine All 4393, *reversed*

G. **Penal Code, 1860 — Ss. 406 and 420 — Criminal breach of trust and cheating — Duty of Magistrate while dealing with private complaint and duty of police, when case arises from FIR — While dealing with a private complaint, the Magistrate, held, required to meticulously examine the contents of the complaint for determining, whether the alleged offences are made out from the averments made in the complaint — However, when a case arises from a FIR, police, held, required to thoroughly ascertain whether the allegations levelled by the informant indeed fall under the category of cheating or criminal breach of trust — Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 — Ss. 316(2) and 318(4) — Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 — Ss. 154 and 200 — Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 173 and 223**

(Para 54)

Held :

Unfortunately, it has become a common practice for the police officers to routinely and mechanically proceed to register an FIR for both the offences i.e. criminal breach of trust and cheating on a mere allegation of some dishonesty or fraud, without any proper application of mind.

(Para 54)

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It is high time that the police officers across the country are imparted proper training in law so as to understand the fine distinction between the offence of cheating vis-à-vis criminal breach of trust. Both offences are independent and distinct. The two offences cannot coexist simultaneously in the same set of facts. They are antithetical to each other. The two provisions of IPC (now BNS, 2023) are not twins that they cannot survive without each other.

(Para 55)

H. **Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 — Ss. 202 and 204 — Issuance of process — Requirements of — Scope of inquiry under S. 202 — Law clarified**

— While issuing process, the court, held, not required to determine whether the accused will be ultimately convicted or acquitted, but to determine whether there are sufficient grounds for proceeding further or not — Held, mere existence of some grounds which would be material in deciding whether the accused should be convicted or acquitted does not generally indicate that the case must necessarily fail — Rather, such grounds, held, may indicate the need for proceeding further in order to discover the truth after a full and proper investigation

— If, however, a bare perusal of a complaint or the evidence led in support of it shows absence of essential ingredients of the offences alleged or that the dispute appears only of a civil nature or that there appear such patent absurdities in evidence that it would be a waste of time to proceed further, then of course, the complaint, held, liable to be dismissed at that stage only

— Further, the Magistrate, held, not required to determine the correctness or the probability or improbability of individual items of evidence on disputable grounds — Rather, the Magistrate, held, required to determine existence or otherwise of a prima facie case on the assumption that what is stated can be true unless the prosecution allegations are so fantastic that they cannot reasonably be held to be true — Further, while issuing process, the Magistrate, held, not entitled to enter into a detailed discussion of the merits or demerits of the case — Even, the High Court also, held, not empowered to go into this matter in its inherent jurisdiction which is to be sparingly used — Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 225 and 227

(Paras 12 to 15)

Held :

The scope of the inquiry under Section 202 CrPC is extremely limited — only to the ascertainment of the truth or falsehood of the allegations made in the complaint — (*i*) on the materials placed by the complainant before the Court, (*ii*) for the limited purpose of finding out whether a prima facie case for issue of process has been made out, and (*iii*) for deciding the question purely from the point of view

of the complainant without at all adverting to any defence that the accused may have.

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(Para 15)

D.N. Bhattacharjee v. *State of W.B.*, (1972) 3 SCC 414 : 1972 SCC (Cri) 564, *followed*

I. **Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 — S. 204 r/w S. 202 — Issuance of process — Requirements of and duty of Magistrate — Held, issuance of summons being a serious matter should not be done mechanically and it should be done only upon satisfaction on the ground for proceeding further in the matter against a person concerned based on the materials collected during the inquiry — Duty of Magistrate while summoning accused, reiterated — Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, S. 227 r/w S. 225**

(Paras 31 and 32)

Held :

The satisfaction on the ground for proceeding would mean that the facts alleged in the complaint would constitute an offence, and when considered along with the statements recorded, would, prima facie, make the accused answerable before the court. In other words, the Magistrate is not to act as a post office in taking cognizance of each and every complaint filed before him and issue process as a matter of course. There must be sufficient indication in the order passed by the Magistrate that he is satisfied that the allegations in the complaint constitute an offence and when considered along with the statements recorded and the result of inquiry or report of investigation under Section 202 CrPC, if any, the accused is answerable before the criminal court, there is ground for proceeding against the accused under Section 204 CrPC, by issuing process for appearance. Application of mind is best demonstrated by disclosure of mind on the satisfaction. ... To be called to appear before the criminal court as an accused is serious matter affecting one's dignity, self-respect and image in society. Hence, the process of criminal court shall not be made a weapon of harassment.

(Para 31)

Mehmood Ul Rehman v. *Khazir Mohammad Tunda*, (2015) 12 SCC 420 : (2016) 1 SCC (Cri) 124, *followed*

J. **Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 — Ss. 202 and 204 — Issuance of process — Right of accused in proceedings under S. 202 CrPC — Held, the accused has got absolutely no locus standi and is not entitled to be heard on the question whether the process should be issued against him or not — Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 225 and 227**

(Para 16)

K. **Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 — Ss. 202 and 204 — Issuance of process — Interference with discretion exercised by the Magistrate by superior court — When permissible — Law clarified**

— Held, in coming to a decision as to whether a process should be issued the Magistrate can take into consideration inherent improbabilities appearing on the face of the complaint or in the evidence led by the complainant in support of the

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allegations — However, there held appears to be a very thin line of demarcation between a probability of conviction of the accused and establishment of a prima facie case against him — Discretion given to the Magistrate on this behalf, held, has to be judicially exercised by him — Once the Magistrate has exercised his discretion, the High Court or even the Supreme Court, held, cannot substitute its own discretion for that of the Magistrate or to examine the case on merits with a view to find out whether or not the allegations in the complaint, if proved, would ultimately end in the conviction of the accused — Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 225 and 227

(Para 16)

L. **Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 — Ss. 204 and 482 — Summoning by Magistrate — Interference by exercising inherent powers — Permissibility and duty of High Court — Law clarified**

— Petition for quashing summoning order, held, maintainable — Further, the High Court, held, liable to determine as to whether the Magistrate applied his mind to form an opinion as to the existence of sufficient ground for proceeding further and in that regard to issue summons to face the trial for the offence concerned — Expression "sufficient grounds for proceeding", held, means that there should be sufficiency of materials against the accused concerned before proceeding under S. 204 — Resultantly, summoning order, held, must be supported by reason while concluding existence of prima facie case against the accused — However, the order, held, need not contain detailed reasons — A fortiori, the order, held, would be bad in law if the reason given turns out to be ex facie incorrect — Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 225 and 528

(Paras 33 and 34)

Held :

The words "sufficient ground for proceeding" appearing in Section 204 are of immense importance. It is these words which amply suggest that an opinion is to be formed only after due application of mind that there is sufficient basis for proceeding against the said accused and formation of such an opinion is to be stated in the order itself. The order is liable to be set aside if no reason is given therein while coming to the conclusion that there is prima facie case against the accused, though the order need not contain detailed reasons. A fortiori, the order would be bad in law if the reason given turns out to be ex facie incorrect.

(Para 34)

Pepsi Foods Ltd. v. *Special Judicial Magistrate*, (1998) 5 SCC 749 : 1998 SCC (Cri) 1400; *Bhushan Kumar* v. *State (NCT of Delhi)*, (2012) 5 SCC 424 : (2012) 2 SCC (Cri) 872; *Sunil Bharti Mittal* v. *CBI*, (2015) 4 SCC 609 : (2015) 2 SCC (Cri) 687, *followed*

M. **Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 — Ss. 204 and 482 — Quashing of process — Illustrations as to when the order of Magistrate issuing process against the accused can be quashed or set aside, enumerated — Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 225 and 528**

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(Para 17)

Nagawwa v. *Veeranna Shivalingappa Konjalgi*, (1976) 3 SCC 736 : 1976 SCC (Cri) 507, *followed*

N. **Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 — S. 156(3) r/w S. 155(2) — Direction for police investigation — Exercise of power under S. 156(3) — Whether permissible before taking cognizance — Held, the power under S. 156(3) can be exercised by a Magistrate even before he takes cognizance provided the complaint discloses the commission of cognizable offences — However, if the complaint does not disclose commission of cognizable offences, such an order of the Magistrate directing investigation is liable to be quashed — Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, Ss. 175(3) and 174**

(Para 28)

Tilak Nagar Industries Ltd. v. *State of A.P.*, (2011) 15 SCC 571 : (2012) 4 SCC (Cri) 645; *State of Haryana* v. *Bhajan Lal*, 1992 Supp (1) SCC 335 : 1992 SCC (Cri) 426, *followed*

Appeal allowed SK-D/71753/CR

Advocates who appeared in this case :

Suhail Dutt, Senior Advocate [Azhar Alam, Sankalp Goswami and Ms B. Vijayalakshmi Menon (Advocate-on-Record), Advocates], for the Appellants;

Rajat Singh (Advocate-on-Record), Neeraj Kr. Sharma and Sarthak Chandra, Advocates, for the Respondents.

Chronological list of cases cited ***on page(s)***

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17. 1964 SCC OnLine SC 185, *Velji Raghavji Patel* v. *State of Maharashtra* 711*g*

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19. 1951 SCC 250, *R.R. Chari* v. *State of U.P.* 706*c-d*

20. 1950 SCC OnLine Cal 49, *Legal Remembrancer* v. *Abani Kumar Banerji* 705*d-e*

The Judgment of the Court was delivered by

J.B. PARDIWALA, J.— This appeal arises from the order passed by the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad dated 3-4-2024[1] in Application No. 15453 of 2023 filed by the appellant herein by which, the High Court rejected the same and thereby declined to quash and set aside the summoning order dated 28-2-2023 passed by the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Khurja, Bulandshahar in Complaint Case No. 547 of 2021.

2. Facts giving rise to this appeal may be summarised as under.

3. Respondent 2 herein is the original complainant. He lodged a private complaint in the Court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Khurja, Bulandshahar against the appellants herein for the offence punishable under Sections 406, 420 and 120-B, respectively, of the Penal Code, 1860 (for short "IPC").

4. The complaint reads thus:

> "It is most respectful that the applicant Vipin Kumar Agarwal, son of late Shri Bhagwat Swaroop Agarwal, who is the owner of a firm Agarwal Udyog, New Mandi, Khurja. The applicant's firm used to supply horse feed, barley and oats to Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd., New Delhi since 1990. In the year 1995, the then head of the Race Club, Shri P.S. Vedi and the then Secretary Sehgal told the applicant that from now on the bills for the supply of horse grain and oats would be made in the name of Delhi Horse Trainers Association, Race

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Course Road, New Delhi. And the Head and Secretary of the same association have now been made separate, they will pay you for the goods supplied. Till the year 2017, the payment of the applicant's firm continued to be regular and now at present Delhi Horse Trainers Association President Kazim Ali Khan and Secretary Sanjeev Charan owe a payment of Rs 9,11,434 to the applicant's firm. Whenever the applicant makes demands, they keep evading when the applicant tried to talk to the current President of the Race Club, J.S. Vedi and the current Secretary about this. Then the Secretary G.S. Vedi said that you should demand your dues from Delhi Horse Trainers Association only, we have no relation with them, then the applicant tried to meet Kazim Ali Pradhan along with Manish Kumar Sharma, son of Mahesh Kumar Sharma, resident of Nawalpura Khurja and Chirag Agarwal, son of Vijay Agarwal, resident of Malpura, Khurja but they refused to talk to the applicant and threatened that if he came here again, it would be very bad and started a scuffle. The applicant feels that both the abovementioned officials of Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd., New Delhi and Delhi Horse Trainers Association, in connivance with each other, cheated the applicant and dishonestly obtained the goods from the applicant's firm in bad faith and they used it for their club and association and now they do not want to pay for the goods given by the applicant. All of them under conspiracy want to grab the money of the applicant's firm, after which the applicant had given a legal notice to

the abovementioned people through his advocate on 18-6-2020 but even after receiving the notice, the above people neither gave any reply to the notice nor was the applicant's outstanding amount paid. In this context, the applicant gave an application to Inspector-in-charge of Kotwali Khurja Nagar on 25-7-2021 and on 6-8-2021, an application letter was sent to SSP Sir Bulandshahar through postal registry, but till date no action has been taken nor has the applicant's report been registered.

Therefore, it is prayed that after the investigation, please summon the accused along with evidence to the court and punish them for the crime committed by them.

Date : 27-8-2021"

5. The plain reading of the complaint would indicate that Appellant 1 is a legal entity. Appellant 2 is the Secretary of Appellant 1 Company, and Appellant 3 is the Honorary President and Non-Executive Director

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of Appellant 1 Company. They used to purchase grains and oats from the complainant meant to be fed to the horses maintained by Appellant 1 Company. According to the complainant, an amount of Rs 9,11,434 (Rupees nine lakhs eleven thousand four hundred thirty-four) is due and payable to him by the appellants towards the sale of horse grains and oats over a period of time. It is alleged that as the appellants failed to make the payment, he thought it fit to file the complaint as according to him he has been cheated by the appellants.

6. The court concerned initially took cognizance upon the complaint but postponed the issuance of process as it thought fit to initiate magisterial inquiry under Section 202 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (for short "the CrPC"). The statement of the complainant recorded by the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate in the course of the magisterial inquiry under Section 202 CrPC reads thus:

> "Name of the witness Ankit Agarwal, s/o Vipin Agarwal, aged about 34 years, occupation — businessman, resident of 13, Malpura, Subhash Road, Khurja, PS Khurja Nagar, District Bulandshahar today on 8-3-2022 on oath gave statement that : Vipin Kumar Agarwal is the owner of a firm Agarwal Udyog which is located in New Mandi Khurja. Delhi Race Course Club 1940 Ltd. has been purchasing horse feed from the abovementioned firm for a long time and payment for the same has been done on time. After the year 2017, Delhi Horse Trainers Association President Kazim Ali and Secretary Sanjeev Charan kept paying the goods. Since thereafter, the abovementioned people owe Rs 9,11,434 to the above firm. After repeated requests, both the abovementioned firms have been telling to make payment to each other but the opposite party has also not made the payment.
>
> Delhi Race Course Club President J.S. Bedi and Secretary H.K. Uppal are delaying the payment of horse feed purchased by them. The people of the above two firms have colluded with each other and do not want to pay for the goods taken. Vipin Agarwal, proprietor of Agarwal Udyog, is my father hence I am aware of the entire matter."

7. The Magistrate also recorded the statement of one Manish Kumar in course of the inquiry under Section 202 CrPC. The statement reads thus:

> "Witness name Manish Kumar Sharma, father's name ..., aged 33 years, occupation — labourer, resident of Nawalpura, Khurja Police Station, Khurja Nagar, District Bulandshahar today on 8-3-2022 on

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oath gave statement that:

I have been working as a bookkeeper for the last 17 years at Vipin Kumar Agarwal's firm Agarwal Udyog, which is located in New Mandi Khurja. From the abovementioned firm, Delhi Race Course Club 1940 Ltd. which is a New Delhi based firm. Have been buying horse grain and oats. President of this firm J.S. Bedi and Secretary H.K. Uppal have been coming to our firm to buy horse feed and oats and the firm has been paying for the purchased goods. It was said by the above two that now the bills for horse feed and oats will be made in the name of Delhi Horse Trainers Association Delhi and the Head of this firm, Kazim Ali and Secretary Sanjeev Charan will pay it. On the request of the above people, horse grain and oats continued to be supplied from our firm. The abovementioned people owe Rs 9,11,434 to our firm, upon being repeatedly asked for payment, the abovementioned people are evading. Once Chirag Agarwal and I went to their office in New Delhi, they refused to talk to Vipin Agarwal and us and they threatened that if they come here again, it will be very bad and they started scuffle. The outstanding amount of Rs 9,11,434 has not yet been paid by the officials of the above two firms. The abovementioned people have fraudulently obtained the goods from our firm in bad faith and do not want to pay for the same. They have used the supplied goods. Certified after reading and listening."

8. At the end of the magisterial inquiry, the court issued process for the offence punishable under Section 406 IPC. The order issuing process reads thus:

"Date : 28-2-2023

The file was presented for orders. The complainant has been heard on the question of summons on an earlier date.

On behalf of the complainant Vipin Kumar Aggarwal, the above complaint was presented against the opposite parties Delhi Race Club, etc. to the effect that the firm of the complainant was supplying horse grain, barley and oats to Delhi Race Club since the year 1990. In the year 1995, the President of the Race Club, Mr P.S. Vedi and the then Sachin Sehgal ji said that the bill would be made in the name of Delhi Horse Trainers Association, Race Course Road, New Delhi and the Head and Secretary of the same association have now been made separately. They will make the payment for the goods given by you. Till the year 2017, the applicant's firm's payment continued to be regular and now at present the payment of Rs 9,11,434 is outstanding from the applicant's firm, when the applicant talked about this to the current President of the Race Club, J.S. Vedi and

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the current Secretary then the secretary said that you should demand your dues from Delhi Horse Trainers Association only. Then the applicant tried to meet Kajim Ali but he refused to talk to the applicant and got into a scuffle. The above two associations and officials unanimously cheated the applicant and obtained goods from the applicant's firm and do not want to pay for the goods given by the applicant. The applicant had given a legal notice to the above people through his advocate on 18-6-2020 but even after receiving the notice, the above people neither gave any reply to the notice nor paid the outstanding amount of the applicant. In this context, the applicant gave an application to Khurja Nagar Police Station and on 6-8-2021 an application was given to SSP Bulandshahar but no action has been taken till date.

On behalf of the complainant, he got himself examined under Section 200 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and under Section 202 CrPC, the statement of witnesses Ankit Aggarwal as PW 1 and Manish Kumar Sharma as PW 2 was recorded. In which they supported the statements mentioned in the complaint. One copy of the application sent by the complainant to the Senior Superintendent of Police as documentary evidence in support of his statements, a photocopy of the registry receipt, one copy of the net receipt postal registry, five copies of the bill book, one true copy of the remaining balance, one copy of receipt of goods, one copy of remaining balance, one copy of legal notice were filed per receipt.

The complainant has stated in his statement under Section 200 CrPC, "after five years of 1990, these people said that we will not make the payment. A separate organisation has been formed for payment, which will do it. An organisation named Delhi Trainers Association has been formed. Now I owe these people nine lakhs eleven thousand four hundred thirty-four rupees. When we asked for money several times, we did not receive it. The President of Delhi Race Course is not ready to talk. I am suffering from cancer. Business is seen by children only. We also gave them legal notice but nothing happened."

Perused the entire evidence material available on file.

On the basis of the evidence presented by the complainant under Section 200 CrPC and Section 202 CrPC, there is prima facie basis for summoning the opposition parties Delhi Race Course Club, Delhi Race Horse Trainers Association, J.S. Bedi, H.K. Uppal, Kazim Ali Khan and Sanjeev Charan for consideration under Section 406 IPC.

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There are sufficient grounds for summoning for trial of a punishable offence under Section 406 IPC.

ORDER

The opposite parties Delhi Race Course Club, Delhi Race Horse Trainers Association, J.S.Bedi, H.K. Uppal, Kazim Ali Khan and Sanjeev Charan are summoned for trial for the offence under Section 406 of the Penal Code. The complainant should process the summons against the opposition parties within a week, every summons should be issued along

with a copy of the complaint letter, the complainant list should be filed and the witnesses should be filed.

The case file be put up on 27-4-2023 for appearance."

9. In such circumstances referred to above, the appellants preferred an application under Section 482 CrPC in the High Court, praying for quashing of the summoning order dated 28-2-2023 passed by the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Khurja, Bulandshahar.

10. The High Court rejected the application filed by the appellants herein, observing as under : (*Delhi Race Club case*[1], SCC OnLine All paras 15-19)

"*15*. On the basis of averments made in the complaint, it is a case of the complainant who was regularly supplying Oats, used for horse. In the year 1995, the complainant was asked to raise invoice in favour of the "Association". The complainant agreed and continued to raise invoice in favour of the "Association". After 2017, an amount of Rs 9,11,454 became due upon the applicants. He contacted Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd. and he was directed to contact the "Association". The applicant Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd. and "Association" are not separate legal entity. The applicants and the "Association" were in collusion and committed fraud with complainant. The goods supplied by complainant were received but its payment was not made.

16. Admittedly, no civil proceedings are pending for the amount in question between the parties. It is not the case of the applicants that transaction was a commercial transaction whereas the case of opposite party No. 2 is for the supply made by him. He is bound to raise his payment on the direction of the Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd. He raised invoices in favour of the "Association" from 1995. There is no change in the manner of raising invoices by the complainant.

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Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd. continued to make payment up to the year 2017. The complainant was not being paid Rs 9,11,454 by the applicants who instead transferred their responsibility to the "Association".

17. Suffice to mention here that the copy of the invoices are brought on record through counter affidavit by the complainant and the same is not controverted by the applicants. Prima facie, it reflects that the invoices were raised by complainant in accordance with the advice received by him and he continued to receive payment on the basis of such invoices and when the payment of Rs 9,11,454 was not paid to the complainant he contacted Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd. which averted him to the "Association". It appears that Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd. and the "Association" are not separate entity.

18. On the face of record, it appears that originally complainant was supplying oats to the 'Company'. In the year 1995, the complainant was directed to raise invoices in favour of the "Association". The Company continued to receive supply of Oats made by the complainant even after

1995, whereas invoices were raised in favour of the "Association". This direction of the company goes to show that there was some mala fide intention on the part of the Company. The complainant bona fide continued to make supply under the direction of the Company. The invoices were raised by the complainant in similar manner since 1995 to 2017 and thereafter. It appears that there was an oral direction to raise invoices in favour of "Association" made by the Company, which indicates mala fide of the Company.

19. After hearing the learned counsel for the parties and after perusing the impugned order, this Court is of the opinion that impugned order has been passed on the basis of facts and circumstances of the case after considering the evidence on record. There is no legal infirmity in the impugned orders, which may call for any interference by this Court in exercise of powers conferred under Section 482 CrPC."

11. Thus, according to the High Court, the intention on the part of the company was prima facie mala fide and the payment of Rs 9,11,434 could be said to be intentionally withheld.

Scope of inquiry under Section 202 CrPC

12. It is by now well-settled that at the stage of issuing process it is

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not the duty of the court to find out as to whether the accused will be ultimately convicted or acquitted. The object of consideration of the merits of the case at this stage could only be to determine whether there are sufficient grounds for proceeding further or not. Mere existence of some grounds which would be material in deciding whether the accused should be convicted or acquitted does not generally indicate that the case must necessarily fail. On the other hand, such grounds may indicate the need for proceeding further in order to discover the truth after a full and proper investigation.

13. If, however, a bare perusal of a complaint or the evidence led in support of it shows essential ingredients of the offences alleged are absent or that the dispute is only of a civil nature or that there are such patent absurdities in evidence produced that it would be a waste of time to proceed further, then of course, the complaint is liable to be dismissed at that stage only.

14. What the Magistrate has to determine at the stage of issue of process is not the correctness or the probability or improbability of individual items of evidence on disputable grounds, but the existence or otherwise of a prima facie case on the assumption that what is stated can be true unless the prosecution allegations are so fantastic that they cannot reasonably be held to be true. [See : *D.N. Bhattacharjee* v. *State of W.B.*[2]]

15. Further it is also well-settled that at the stage of issuing process a Magistrate is mainly concerned with the allegations made in the complaint or the evidence led in support of the same and he is only to be prima facie satisfied whether there are sufficient grounds for proceeding against the accused. It is not the province of the Magistrate to enter into a detailed discussion of the

merits or demerits of the case nor can the High Court go into this matter in its inherent jurisdiction which is to be sparingly used. The scope of the inquiry under Section 202 CrPC is extremely limited — only to the ascertainment of the truth or falsehood of the allegations made in the complaint — (*i*) on the materials placed by the complainant before the Court, (*ii*) for the limited purpose of finding out whether a prima facie case for issue of process has been made out, and (*iii*) for deciding the question purely from the point of view of the complainant without at all adverting to any defence that the accused may have.

16. In fact in proceedings under Section 202 CrPC, the accused has

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got absolutely no locus standi and is not entitled to be heard on the question whether the process should be issued against him or not. It is true that in coming to a decision as to whether a process should be issued the Magistrate can take into consideration inherent improbabilities appearing on the face of the complaint or in the evidence led by the complainant in support of the allegations but there appears to be a very thin line of demarcation between a probability of conviction of the accused and establishment of a prima facie case against him. The discretion given to the Magistrate on this behalf has to be judicially exercised by him. Once the Magistrate has exercised his discretion, it is not for the High Court or even the Supreme Court to substitute its own discretion for that of the Magistrate or to examine the case on merits with a view to find out whether or not the allegations in the complaint, if proved, would ultimately end in the conviction of the accused.

17. These considerations are totally foreign to the scope and ambit of an inquiry under Section 202 CrPC which culminates into an order under Section 204. [See : *Nagawwa* v. *Veeranna Shivalingappa Konjalgi*[3].] It is no doubt true that in this very decision this Court has enumerated certain illustrations as to when the order of the Magistrate issuing process against the accused can be quashed or set aside. These illustrations are as under : (*Nagawwa case*[3], SCC p. 741, para 5)

> "*5.* ... (1) Where the allegations made in the complaint or the statements of the witnesses recorded in support of the same taken at their face value make out absolutely no case against the accused or the complaint does not disclose the essential ingredients of an offence which is alleged against the accused;
>
> (2) Where the allegations made in the complaint are patently absurd and inherently improbable so that no prudent person can ever reach a conclusion that there is sufficient ground for proceeding against the accused;
>
> (3) Where the discretion exercised by the Magistrate in issuing process is capricious and arbitrary having been based either on no evidence or on materials which are wholly irrelevant or inadmissible; and

> (4) Where the complaint suffers from fundamental legal defects, such as, want of sanction, or absence of a complaint by legally

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competent authority and the like."

18. Each penal section of the Penal Code or of the other laws can be subjected to an analysis by posing and answering the following questions:

I. What is the overt act stipulated in the section, which overt act has resulted in an injury?

II. What is the state of mind stipulated in respect of the accused and which state of mind must precede or accompany the act of the accused?

Analysis

19. Having heard the learned counsel appearing for the parties and having gone through the materials on record, the only question that falls for our consideration is whether the High Court committed any error in passing the impugned order[1].

20. The case at hand is one of an unpaid seller. It is the case of the complainant that he used to regularly supply consignments of grains and oats meant for horses at the Delhi Race Club. The complainant used to raise invoices in favour of the Club and the Club used to pay the requisite amount. However, according to the complainant after 2017, the Club stopped making the payment. It is the case of the complainant that an amount of Rs 9,11,434 is due and payable by the appellants towards the supply of the consignment of oats.

21. The impugned order[1] passed by the High Court is a fine specimen of total non-application of mind. Although the complaint was filed for the offence punishable under Sections 406, 420 and 120-B, respectively, of IPC yet the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate thought fit to take cognizance and issue process only for the offence of criminal breach of trust as defined under Section 405 IPC and made punishable under Section 406 IPC.

22. We are of the view that even if the entire case of the complainant is accepted as true no offence worth the name is disclosed.

23. This Court has time and again reminded that summoning of an accused in a criminal case is a serious matter. Criminal law cannot be set into motion as a matter of course. It is not that the complainant has to bring only two witnesses to support his allegations in the complaint to have the criminal law set into motion. The order of the Magistrate summoning the accused must reflect that he has applied his mind to the facts of the case and the law applicable thereto. He has to examine the nature of allegations made in the complaint and the evidence both oral and documentary in support thereof. It is not that the Magistrate is a silent spectator at the time of recording of preliminary evidence before summoning of the accused. The Magistrate has to carefully scrutinise the evidence brought on record and may even himself put

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questions to the complainant and his witnesses to elicit answers to find out the truthfulness of the allegations or otherwise

and then examine if any offence is prima facie committed by all or any of the accused. [See : *Pepsi Foods Ltd.* v. *Special Judicial Magistrate*[4].]

24. Where a jurisdiction is exercised on a complaint petition filed in terms of Section 156(3) or Section 200 CrPC, the Magistrate is required to apply his mind. The Penal Code does not contain any provision for attaching vicarious liability on the part of Appellants 2 and 3, respectively, herein who are none other than office-bearers of Appellant 1 Company. When Appellant 1 is the Company and it is alleged that the company has committed the offence then there is no question of attributing vicarious liability to the office-bearers of the Company so far as the offence of cheating or criminal breach of trust is concerned. The office-bearers could be arrayed as accused only if direct allegations are levelled against them. In other words, the complainant has to demonstrate that he has been cheated on account of criminal breach of trust or cheating or deception practised by the office-bearers.

25. The Magistrate failed to pose unto himself the correct question viz. as to whether the complaint petition, even if given face value and taken to be correct in its entirety, would lead to the conclusion that Appellants 2 and 3 herein were personally liable for any offence. Appellant 1 is a body corporate. Vicarious liability of the office-bearers would arise provided any provision exists in that behalf in the statute. Statutes indisputably must contain provision fixing such vicarious liabilities. Even for the said purpose, it is obligatory on the part of the complainant to make requisite allegations which would attract the provisions constituting vicarious liability.

26. In *Legal Remembrancer* v. *Abani Kumar Banerji*[5], a Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court speaking through K.C. Das Gupta, J. (as he then was) held that a Magistrate is not bound to take cognizance of an offence merely because a complaint is filed before him. He is required to carefully apply his mind to the contents of the complaint before taking cognizance of any offence alleged therein. The relevant observations read as under : (SCC OnLine Cal)

> "... *As I read Section 190 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the subsequent sections, it seems to me to be clear that a Magistrate is not bound to take cognizance of an offence, merely because a petition of complaint is filed before him.* Mr Mukherji's argument is

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that a Magistrate cannot possibly take any action with regard to a petition of complaint, without applying his mind to it, and taking cognizance of the offence mentioned in the complaint necessarily takes place, when the Magistrate's mind is applied to the petition. Consequently Mr Mukherji argues, whenever a Magistrate takes the action, say, of issuing search warrant or asking the police to enquire and to investigate, he has taken cognizance of the case. In my judgment, this is putting a wrong connotation on the words "taking cognizance". What is "taking cognizance" has not been defined in the Code of Criminal Procedure, and I have no desire now to attempt to define it. *It seems to me clear, however, that before it can*

be said that any Magistrate has taken cognizance of any offence under Section 190(1)(a) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, he must not only have applied his mind to the contents of the petition, but he must have done so for the purpose of proceeding in a particular way as indicated in the subsequent provisions of this Chapter —proceeding under Section 200, and thereafter sending it for enquiry and report under Section 202. When the Magistrate applies his mind not for the purpose of proceeding under the subsequent sections of this Chapter, but for taking action of some other kind e.g. ordering investigation under Section 156(3), or issuing a search warrant for the purpose of the investigation, he cannot be said to have taken cognizance of the offence. My conclusion, therefore, is that the learned Magistrate is wrong in thinking that the Chief Presidency Magistrate was bound to take cognizance of the case as soon as the petition of complaint was filed."

(emphasis supplied)

27. The aforesaid observation of the Calcutta High Court was referred to and relied upon with approval by this Court in its decision in *R.R. Chari* v. *State of U.P.*[6]

28. In *Tilak Nagar Industries Ltd.* v. *State of A.P.*[7], this Court held that the power under Section 156(3) CrPC can be exercised by a Magistrate even before he takes cognizance provided the complaint discloses the commission of cognizable offences and if the complaint does not disclose commission of cognizable offences, such an order of the Magistrate directing investigation is liable to be quashed. The relevant observations read as under : (SCC p. 574, paras 11-12)

"*11.* After considering the rival submissions, we are of the view that the contentions of Mr Luthra are correct in view of Section 155

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(2) of the Code as explained in *Bhajan Lal*[8]. We are of the opinion that the statutory safeguard which is given under Section 155(2) of the Code must be strictly followed, since they are conceived in public interest and as a guarantee against frivolous and vexatious investigation.

12. The order of the Magistrate dated 21-6-2010 does not disclose that he has taken cognizance. However, power under Section 156(3) can be exercised by the Magistrate even before he takes cognizance provided the complaint discloses the commission of cognizable offence. Since in the instant case the complaint does not do so, the order of the Magistrate stated above cannot be sustained in law and is accordingly quashed."

29. The aforesaid decision was in context with the power of the Magistrate to order police investigation under Section 156(3) CrPC. What is sought to be conveyed in the said decision is that when the Magistrate orders police investigation under Section 156(3) CrPC he does not take cognizance upon the complaint. It is only upon receipt of the police report that the Magistrate may

take cognizance. If at the stage of pre-cognizance, the Magistrate is expected to be careful or to put it in other words, the Magistrate is obliged to look into the complaint threadbare so as to reach to a prima facie conclusion whether the offence is disclosed or not, then he is expected to be more careful when he is actually taking cognizance upon a private complaint and ordering issue of process.

30. The aforesaid aspect could be said to have been completely lost sight of by the High Court, while rejecting the application filed by the appellant herein under Section 482 CrPC, seeking quashing of the summoning order.

31. In *Mehmood Ul Rehman* v. *Khazir Mohammad Tunda*[9], this Court held thus : (SCC p. 430, para 22)

"*22. ... The satisfaction on the ground for proceeding would mean that the facts alleged in the complaint would constitute an offence, and when considered along with the statements recorded, would, prima facie, make the accused answerable before the court. ... In other words, the Magistrate is not to act as a post office in taking cognizance of each and every complaint filed before him and issue process as a matter of course. There must be sufficient indication in the order passed by the Magistrate that he is satisfied that the*

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allegations in the complaint constitute an offence and when considered along with the statements recorded and the result of inquiry or report of investigation under Section 202 CrPC, if any, the accused is answèrable before the criminal court, there is ground for proceeding against the accused under Section 204 CrPC, by issuing process for appearance. Application of mind is best demonstrated by disclosure of mind on the satisfaction. ... To be called to appear before the criminal court as an accused is serious matter affecting one's dignity, self-respect and image in society. Hence, the process of criminal court shall not be made a weapon of harassment."

(emphasis supplied)

32. The principle of law discernible from the aforesaid decision is that issuance of summons is a serious matter and, therefore, should not be done mechanically and it should be done only upon satisfaction on the ground for proceeding further in the matter against a person concerned based on the materials collected during the inquiry.

33. In the aforesaid circumstances, the next question to be considered is whether a summons issued by a Magistrate can be interfered with in exercise of the power under Section 482 CrPC. In the decisions in *Bhushan Kumar* v. *State (NCT of Delhi)*[10] and *Pepsi Foods*[4], this Court held that a petition filed under Section 482 CrPC, for quashing an order summoning the accused is maintainable. There cannot be any doubt that once it is held that sine qua non for exercise of the power to issue summons is the subjective satisfaction *"on the ground for proceeding further"* while exercising the power to consider

the legality of a summons issued by a Magistrate, certainly it is the duty of the Court to look into the question as to whether the learned Magistrate had applied his mind to form an opinion as to the existence of sufficient ground for proceeding further and in that regard to issue summons to face the trial for the offence concerned. In this context, we think it appropriate to state that one should understand that "taking cognizance", empowered under Section 190 CrPC, and "issuing process", empowered under Section 204 CrPC, are different and distinct. [See the decision in *Sunil Bharti Mittal* v. *CBI*[11]].

34. In *Sunil Bharti Mittal*[11], this Court interpreted the expression *"sufficient grounds for proceeding"* and held that there should be sufficiency of materials against the accused concerned before proceeding under Section 204 CrPC. It was held thus : (SCC pp. 644-

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45, para 53)

> *"53. However, the words "sufficient ground for proceeding" appearing in Section 204 are of immense importance. It is these words which amply suggest that an opinion is to be formed only after due application of mind that there is sufficient basis for proceeding against the said accused and formation of such an opinion is to be stated in the order itself. The order is liable to be set aside if no reason is given therein while coming to the conclusion that there is prima facie case against the accused, though the order need not contain detailed reasons. A fortiori, the order would be bad in law if the reason given turns out to be ex facie incorrect."*
>
> (emphasis supplied)

Difference between criminal breach of trust and cheating

35. This Court in its decision in *S.W. Palanitkar* v. *State of Bihar*[12] expounded the difference in the ingredients required for constituting of an offence of criminal breach of trust (Section 406 IPC) vis-à-vis the offence of cheating (Section 420). The relevant observations read as under : (SCC p. 246, paras 9-10)

> "9. The ingredients in order to constitute a criminal breach of trust are : (*i*) entrusting a person with property or with any dominion over property; (*ii*) that person entrusted : (*a*) dishonestly misappropriating or converting that property to his own use; or (*b*) dishonestly using or disposing of that property or wilfully suffering any other person so to do in violation (*i*) of any direction of law prescribing the mode in which such trust is to be discharged, (*ii*) of any legal contract made, touching the discharge of such trust.
>
> *10*. The ingredients of an offence of cheating are : (*i*) there should be fraudulent or dishonest inducement of a person by deceiving him, (*ii*)(*a*) the person so deceived should be induced to deliver any property to any person, or to consent that any person shall retain any property; or (*b*) the person so deceived should be intentionally induced to do or omit to do anything which he would not do or omit if he were not so deceived; and (*iii*) in

cases covered by (*ii*)(*b*), the act of omission should be one which causes or is likely to cause damage or harm to the person induced in body, mind, reputation or property."

36. What can be discerned from the above is that the offences of criminal breach of trust (Section 406 IPC) and cheating (Section 420

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IPC) have specific ingredients:

In order to constitute a criminal breach of trust (Section 406 IPC)

(1) There must be entrustment with person for property or dominion over the property, and

(2) The person entrusted:

(*a*) Dishonestly misappropriated or converted property to his own use, or

(*b*) Dishonestly used or disposed of the property or wilfully suffers any other person so to do in violation of:

(*i*) Any direction of law prescribing the method in which the trust is discharged; or

(*ii*) Legal contract touching the discharge of trust (see : *S.W. Palanitkar*[12]).

Similarly, in respect of an offence under Section 420 IPC, the essential ingredients are:

(1) Deception of any person, either by making a false or misleading representation or by other action or by omission;

(2) Fraudulently or dishonestly inducing any person to deliver any property, or

(3) The consent that any person shall retain any property and finally intentionally inducing that person to do or omit to do anything which he would not do or omit (see : *Harmanpreet Singh Ahluwalia* v. *State of Punjab*[13]).

37. Further, in both the aforesaid sections, mens rea i.e. intention to defraud or the dishonest intention must be present, and in the case of cheating it must be there from the very beginning or inception.

38. In our view, the plain reading of the complaint fails to spell out any of the aforesaid ingredients noted above. We may only say, with a view to clear a serious misconception of law in the mind of the police as well as the courts below, that if it is a case of the complainant that offence of criminal breach of trust as defined under Section 405 IPC, punishable under Section 406 IPC, is committed by the accused, then in the same breath it cannot be said that the accused has also committed the offence of cheating as defined and explained in Section 415 IPC, punishable under Section 420 IPC.

39. Every act of breach of trust may not result in a penal offence of

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criminal breach of trust unless there is evidence of manipulating act of fraudulent misappropriation. An act of breach of trust involves a civil wrong in respect of which the person may seek his remedy for damages in civil courts but, any breach of trust with a mens rea, gives rise to a criminal prosecution as well. It has been held in *Hari Prasad Chamaria* v. *Bishun Kumar Surekha*[14] as under : (SCC p. 824, para 4)

> "*4*. We have heard Mr Maheshwari on behalf of the appellant and are of the opinion that no case has been made out against the respondents under Section 420 of the Penal Code, 1860. For the purpose of the present appeal, we would assume that the various allegations of fact which have been made in the complaint by the appellant are correct. Even after making that allowance, we find that the complaint does not disclose the commission of any offence on the part of the respondents under Section 420 of the Penal Code, 1860. There is nothing in the complaint to show that the respondent had dishonest or fraudulent intention at the time the appellant parted with Rs 35,000. There is also nothing to indicate that the respondents induced the appellant to pay them Rs 35,000 by deceiving him. It is further not the case of the appellant that a representation was made by the respondents to him at or before the time he paid the money to them and that at the time the representation was made, the respondents knew the same to be false. The fact that the respondents subsequently did not abide by their commitment that they would show the appellant to be the proprietor of Drang Transport Corporation and would also render accounts to him in the month of December might create civil liability for them, but this fact would not be sufficient to fasten criminal liability on the respondents for the offence of cheating."

40. To put it in other words, the case of cheating and dishonest intention starts with the very inception of the transaction. But in the case of criminal breach of trust, a person who comes into possession of the movable property and receives it legally, but illegally retains it or converts it to his own use against the terms of the contract, then the question is, in a case like this, whether the retention is with dishonest intention or not, whether the retention involves criminal breach of trust or only a civil liability would depend upon the facts of each case.

41. The distinction between mere breach of contract and the offence of criminal breach of trust and cheating is a fine one. In case of cheating, the intention of the accused at the time of inducement should be looked into which may be judged by a subsequent conduct, but for this, the subsequent conduct is not the sole test. Mere breach of contract cannot give rise to a criminal prosecution for cheating unless fraudulent or dishonest intention is shown right from the beginning of the transaction i.e. the time when the offence is said to have been

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committed. Therefore, it is this intention, which is the gist of the offence.

42. Whereas, for the criminal breach of trust, the property must have been entrusted to the accused or he must have dominion over it. The property in respect of which the offence of breach of trust has been committed must be either the property of some person other than the accused or the beneficial interest in or ownership of it must be of some other person. The accused must hold that property on trust of such other person. Although the offence i.e. the offence of breach of trust and cheating involve dishonest intention, yet they are mutually exclusive and different in basic concept.

43. There is a distinction between criminal breach of trust and cheating. For cheating, criminal intention is necessary at the time of making a false or misleading representation i.e. since inception. In criminal breach of trust, mere proof of entrustment is sufficient. Thus, in case of criminal breach of trust, the offender is lawfully entrusted with the property, and he dishonestly misappropriated the same. Whereas, in case of cheating, the offender fraudulently or dishonestly induces a person by deceiving him to deliver any property. In such a situation, both the offences cannot co-exist simultaneously.

44. At the most, the Court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate could have issued process for the offence punishable under Section 420 IPC i.e. cheating but in any circumstances no case of criminal breach of trust is made out. The reason being that indisputably there is no entrustment of any property in the case at hand. It is not even the case of the complainant that any property was lawfully entrusted to the appellants and that the same has been dishonestly misappropriated. The case of the complainant is plain and simple. He says that the price of the goods sold by him has not been paid. Once there is a sale, Section 406 IPC goes out of picture. According to the complainant, the invoices raised by him were not cleared. No case worth the name of cheating is also made out.

45. Even if the Magistrate would have issued process for the offence punishable under Section 420 IPC i.e. cheating, the same would have been liable to be quashed and set aside, as none of the ingredients to constitute the offence of cheating are disclosed from the materials on record.

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46. It has been held in *State of Gujarat* v. *Jaswantlal Nathalal*[15] : (SCC OnLine SC para 8)

> "*8.* The term "entrusted" found in Section 405 IPC governs not only the words "with the property" immediately following it but also the words "or with any dominion over the property" occurring thereafter—see *Velji Raghavji Patel* v. *State of Maharashtra*[16]. Before there can be any entrustment there must be a trust meaning thereby an obligation annexed to the ownership of property and a confidence reposed in and accepted by the owner or declared and accepted by him for the benefit of another or of another and the owner. But that does not mean that such an entrustment need conform to all the technicalities of the law of trust — see *Jaswantrai*

Manilal Akhaney v. *State of Bombay*[17]. The expression "entrustment" carries with it the implication that the person handing over any property or on whose behalf that property is handed over to another, continues to be its owner. Further the person handing over the property must have confidence in the person taking the property so as to create a fiduciary relationship between them. A mere transaction of sale cannot amount to an "entrustment"."

47. Similarly, in *CBI* v. *Duncans Agro Industries Ltd.*[18] this Court held that the expression "*entrusted with property*" used in Section 405 IPC connotes that the property in respect of which criminal breach of trust can be committed must necessarily be the property of some person other than the accused or that the beneficial interest in or ownership thereof must be in the other person and the offender must hold such property in trust for such other person or for his benefit. The relevant observations read as under : (SCC pp. 607-608, para 27)

> "*27.* In the instant case, a serious dispute has been raised by the learned counsel appearing for the respective parties as to whether on the face of the allegations, an offence of criminal breach of trust is constituted or not. *In our view, the expression "entrusted with property" or "with any dominion over property" has been used in a wide sense in Section 405 IPC. Such expression includes all cases in which goods are entrusted, that is, voluntarily handed over for a specific purpose and dishonestly disposed of in violation of law or in violation of contract. The expression "entrusted" appearing in Section 405 IPC is not necessarily a term of law. It has wide and different implications in different contexts. It is, however, necessary that the*

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ownership or beneficial interest in the ownership of the property entrusted in respect of which offence is alleged to have been committed must be in some person other than the accused and the latter must hold it on account of some person or in some way for his benefit. The expression "trust" in Section 405 IPC is a comprehensive expression and has been used to denote various kinds of relationships like the relationship of trustee and beneficiary, bailor and bailee, master and servant, pledger and pledgee. When some goods are hypothecated by a person to another person, the ownership of the goods still remains with the person who has hypothecated such goods. The property in respect of which criminal breach of trust can be committed must necessarily be the property of some person other than the accused or the beneficial interest in or ownership of it must be in the other person and the offender must hold such property in trust for such other person or for his benefit. In a case of pledge, the pledged article belongs to some other person but the same is kept in trust by the pledgee."

(emphasis supplied)

48. The aforesaid exposition of law makes it clear that there should be some entrustment of property to the accused wherein the ownership is not transferred to the accused. In case of sale of movable property, although the payment may be deferred yet the property in the goods passes on delivery as per Sections 20 and 24, respectively, of the Sale of Goods Act, 1930.

"**20.** ***Specific goods in a deliverable state.***—Where there is an unconditional contract for the sale of specific goods in a deliverable state, the property in the goods passes to the buyer when the contract is made and it is immaterial whether the time of payment of the price or the time of delivery of goods, or both, is postponed.

* * *

24. ***Goods sent on approval or "on sale or return".***— When goods are delivered to the buyer on approval or "on sale or return" or other similar terms, the property therein passes to the buyer—

(*a*) when he signifies his approval or acceptance to the seller or does any other act adopting the transaction;

(*b*) if he does not signify his approval or acceptance to the seller but retains the goods without giving notice of rejection, then, if a time has been fixed for the return of the goods on the

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expiration of such time, and, if no time has been fixed, on the expiration of a reasonable time."

49. From the aforesaid, there is no manner of any doubt whatsoever that in case of sale of goods, the property passes to the purchaser from the seller when the goods are delivered. Once the property in the goods passes to the purchaser, it cannot be said that the purchaser was entrusted with the property of the seller. Without entrustment of property, there cannot be any criminal breach of trust. Thus, prosecution of cases on charge of criminal breach of trust, for failure to pay the consideration amount in case of sale of goods is flawed to the core. There can be civil remedy for the non-payment of the consideration amount, but no criminal case will be maintainable for it. [See : *Lalit Chaturvedi* v. *State of U.P.*[19] and *Mideast Integrated Steels Ltd.* v. *State of Jharkhand*[20].]

50. The case at hand falls in Category 1 as laid in *Nagawwa*[3] referred to in para 17 of this judgment.

51. If it is the case of the complainant that a particular amount is due and payable to him then he should have filed a civil suit for recovery of the amount against the appellants herein. But he could not have gone to the Court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate by filing a complaint of cheating and criminal breach of trust. It appears that till this date, the complainant has not filed any civil suit for recovery of the amount which according to him is due and payable to him by the appellants. He seems to have prima facie lost the period of limitation for filing such a civil suit.

52. In such circumstances referred to above, the continuation of the criminal proceeding would be nothing but abuse of the process of law.

Final conclusion

53. Before we close this matter, we would like to say something as regards the casual approach of the courts below in cases like the one at hand. The Indian Penal Code (IPC) was the official Criminal Code in the Republic of India inherited from British India after Independence. IPC came into force in the sub-continent during the British rule in 1862. IPC remained in force for almost a period of 162 years until it was repealed and replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita ("BNS") in December 2023 which came into effect on 1-7-2024. It is indeed very sad to note that even after these many years, the courts have not been

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able to understand the fine distinction between criminal breach of trust and cheating.

54. When dealing with a private complaint, the law enjoins upon the Magistrate a duty to meticulously examine the contents of the complaint so as to determine whether the offence of cheating or criminal breach of trust as the case may be is made out from the averments made in the complaint. The Magistrate must carefully apply its mind to ascertain whether the allegations, as stated, genuinely constitute these specific offences. In contrast, when a case arises from an FIR, this responsibility is of the police — to thoroughly ascertain whether the allegations levelled by the informant indeed fall under the category of cheating or criminal breach of trust. Unfortunately, it has become a common practice for the police officers to routinely and mechanically proceed to register an FIR for both the offences i.e. criminal breach of trust and cheating on a mere allegation of some dishonesty or fraud, without any proper application of mind.

55. It is high time that the police officers across the country are imparted proper training in law so as to understand the fine distinction between the offence of cheating vis-à-vis criminal breach of trust. Both offences are independent and distinct. The two offences cannot coexist simultaneously in the same set of facts. They are antithetical to each other. The two provisions of IPC (now BNS, 2023) are not twins that they cannot survive without each other.

56. In view of the aforesaid, the appeal succeeds and is hereby allowed.

57. The impugned order[1] passed by the High Court is set aside so also the order passed by the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Khurja, Bulandshahar taking cognizance upon the complaint.

58. Pending applications, if any, shall stand disposed of.

59. We direct the Registry to send one copy each of this judgment to the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice, Union of India and also to the Principal Secretary, Home Department, Union of India.

———

† Arising from the impugned Final Judgment and Order in *Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd.* v. *State of U.P.*, 2024 SCC OnLine All 4393 (Allahabad High Court, Application under S. 482 No. 15453 of 2023, dt. 3-4-2024) **[Reversed]**

[1] *Delhi Race Club (1940) Ltd.* v. *State of U.P.*, 2024 SCC OnLine All 4393

[2] *D.N. Bhattacharjee* v. *State of W.B.*, (1972) 3 SCC 414 : 1972 SCC (Cri) 564

[3] *Nagawwa* v. *Veeranna Shivalingappa Konjalgi*, (1976) 3 SCC 736 : 1976 SCC (Cri) 507

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[4] *Pepsi Foods Ltd.* v. *Special Judicial Magistrate*, (1998) 5 SCC 749 : 1998 SCC (Cri) 1400

[5] *Legal Remembrancer* v. *Abani Kumar Banerji*, 1950 SCC OnLine Cal 49 : AIR 1950 Cal 437

[6] *R.R. Chari* v. *State of U.P.*, 1951 SCC 250 : AIR 1951 SC 207

[7] *Tilak Nagar Industries Ltd.* v. *State of A.P.*, (2011) 15 SCC 571 : (2012) 4 SCC (Cri) 645

[8] *State of Haryana* v. *Bhajan Lal*, 1992 Supp (1) SCC 335 : 1992 SCC (Cri) 426

[9] *Mehmood Ul Rehman* v. *Khazir Mohammad Tunda*, (2015) 12 SCC 420 : (2016) 1 SCC (Cri) 124

[10] *Bhushan Kumar* v. *State (NCT of Delhi)*, (2012) 5 SCC 424 : (2012) 2 SCC (Cri) 872

[11] *Sunil Bharti Mittal* v. *CBI*, (2015) 4 SCC 609 : (2015) 2 SCC (Cri) 687

[12] *S.W. Palanitkar* v. *State of Bihar*, (2002) 1 SCC 241 : 2002 SCC (Cri) 129

[13] *Harmanpreet Singh Ahluwalia* v. *State of Punjab*, (2009) 7 SCC 712 : (2009) 3 SCC (Cri) 620

[14] *Hari Prasad Chamaria* v. *Bishun Kumar Surekha*, (1973) 2 SCC 823 : 1973 SCC (Cri) 1082

[15] *State of Gujarat* v. *Jaswantlal Nathalal*, 1967 SCC OnLine SC 58 : AIR 1968 SC 700 : (1968) 2 SCR 408

[16] *Velji Raghavji Patel* v. *State of Maharashtra*, 1964 SCC OnLine SC 185 : AIR 1965 SC 1433 : (1965) 2 SCR 429

[17] *Jaswantrai Manilal Akhaney* v. *State of Bombay*, 1956 SCC OnLine SC 46 : AIR 1956 SC 575 : 1956 SCR 483

[18] *CBI* v. *Duncans Agro Industries Ltd.*, (1996) 5 SCC 591 : 1996 SCC (Cri) 1045

[19] *Lalit Chaturvedi* v. *State of U.P.*, (2024) 12 SCC 483 : 2024 SCC OnLine SC 171

[20] *Mideast Integrated Steels Ltd.* v. *State of Jharkhand*, 2023 SCC OnLine Jhar 301

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Annexure - E

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
NAGPUR BENCH, NAGPUR

CRIMINAL WRIT PETITION NO.1232 OF 2017

Petitioners : 1] Bharat Uttam Rajurkar,
Age 52 years, Occupation : Cultivator,
R/o Shewati Jahagir, District Amravati.

2] Mahadev Uttamrao Rajurkar,
Age 66 years, Occupation : Retired.

3] Sachin Mahadevrao Rajurkar,
Age 29 years, Occupation : Business.

Both r/o Rathi Nagar, Amravati.

-- ***Versus*** --

Respondent : The State of Maharashtra,
Through P.S.O. Of P.S. Nandgaonpeth,
District Amravati.

=-=
Shri P.W. Mirza, Advocate for the Petitioners.
Shri C.A. Lokhande, A.P.P. for the Respondent/State.
=-=

CORAM : S.B. SHUKRE, J.
DATE : 12th JANUARY, 2018.

ORAL JUDGMENT :-

Rule. Rule made returnable forthwith. Heard finally by consent.

02] This petition questions the legality and correctness of the orders passed by the Courts below rejecting the petitioners'

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HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY

application filed under Section 216 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (for short, 'Cr.P.C.') for alteration of the charge.

03] The first order of rejection came from the trial Court, which is the Court of Judicial Magistrate First Class, Court No.8, Amravati, on 21/03/2016. The second order of rejection was in Criminal Revision No.42/2016 passed on 22/11/2017 by the learned Sessions Judge, Amravati.

04] There have been three grounds taken for pressing the prayer for alteration of the charge. The first ground is that the charge, as framed, is defective and the defect is the result of non-compliance with the mandatory provision of law under Section 239 of Cr.P.C. requiring the Court framing the charge to give an opportunity of hearing to the accused before the charge is framed. The second ground is that at least an offence of extortion punishable under Section 386 of Indian Penal Code is not made out in any manner so as to enable the Court to try the accused on such charge. The third ground relates to making a hotchpotch of several distinct offences committed by different accused persons at different places, different points of time thereby violating the mandate of Sections 212, 218, 219, 220 and 223 of Cr.P.C.

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05] Shri P.W. Mirza, learned Counsel for the petitioners to justify the grounds of challenge, has taken me through the relevant paragraphs of the impugned orders. Shri C.A. Lokhande, learned Additional Public Prosecutor for the State opposing the argument of learned Counsel for the petitioners submits that even if some errors are there in framing of the charge, no prejudice is going to be caused to the petitioners, as ultimately they would be getting adequate opportunity to prove their defence and show as to how the charge framed against them is without any substance.

06] To deal with first objection, one has to consider the provisions of Sections 239 and 240 of Cr.P.C., this being a warrant trial case. These provisions require the Magistrate to give the prosecution and the accused an opportunity of being heard before the charge is framed. Similar provisions are to be found under Sections 227 and 228 of Cr.P.C., which apply to trial of session case under Chapter XVIII of Cr.P.C. They oblige the Sessions Court to hear the submissions of the accused and the prosecution before the charge is framed. In interpreting these sections, the learned single judges of this Court, in at least two cases, have taken a view that the procedure prescribed in these sections is not an empty formality and a Sessions Judge is bound to comply with these

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provisions of law in the letter and spirit. A useful reference in this regard may be made to the cases of *Ambadas Kashirao Kharad and others vs. State of Maharashtra – [2007(1) Mh.L.J. (Cri.) 517]* and *Shri Hitesh Kishorechand Raithatha & Ors. vs. State of Maharashtra & Anr. - [2008 ALL MR (Cri) 3445].*

07] The order passed by the learned Magistrate dated 21/03/2016 discloses that the learned Magistrate "*prima facie* presumed" (paragraph 11 of the oder and page 84 of the paper-book of the writ petition) that accused persons were represented by a lawyer and, therefore, his learned predecessor must have framed the charge after hearing of the accused persons and their lawyers. I do not understand the logic behind such an observation. There cannot be any "*prima facie* presumption" about the predecessor of the learned Magistrate having heard the accused persons before framing of the charge only because on the date on which the charge was framed, the accused persons represented through lawyers were present in the Court. Personal presence of accused is one thing and hearing them is another. To record a finding that the accused were heard before the charge was framed, one needs to satisfy oneself from the notings made in the order-sheet of the case and one cannot do so through presumptions, suppositions and

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assumptions as the learned Magistrate has done in this case. He rather ought to have satisfied himself by going through the record as to whether or not his predecessor indeed gave an opportunity of hearing to the accused persons. If there was no noting made in the order-sheet or the Roznama in this regard, there was no question of drawing of any "presumption" much less "*prima facie* presumption". After all, framing of charge is a serious business. When Sections 239 and 240 of Cr.P.C. mandate that charge must be framed after giving an opportunity of hearing to the accused, the mandate must be followed realistically and not presumptively. The view taken in the cases of *Ambadas and Hitesh,* cited earlier, though in respect of scope and applicability of Sections 227 and 228 of Cr.P.C. would, in my considered opinion, cover the issue of right of accused to be heard before framing of charge in terms of Sections 239 and 240 of Cr.P.C., as well, as all these provisions, at their base, are similar.

08] The impugned orders clearly show that no such opportunity of being heard was ever granted to the petitioners before framing of the charge and, therefore, for this reason alone, the charge, as framed, against the petitioners deserves to be quashed and set aside.

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09] Apart from above, I find that the charge framed for an offence punishable under Section 386 of the Indian Penal Code could not have been framed in the present case, because admittedly no money has been parted with. Even the learned Sessions Judge in the impugned order has found it to be so. But the learned Sessions Judge refrained from passing any order of withdrawal of the charge on the ground that Section 216 of Cr.P.C. is only about "alteration and addition" of any offence to the charge already framed and not about withdrawal of or removal of an offence from the charge framed.

10] I think, the learned Sessions Judge has not considered the inherent contradictions in such a finding and the futility of holding a trial for a charge whose fate is a forgone conclusion. When it is found and indeed has been found by him in no uncertain words that offence under Section 386 of the Indian Penal Code is not made out, there should be no warrant to lay a charge on a count about which the Court has already made up it's mind against. In the case of *Isaac Isanga Musumba & Ors. vs. State of Maharashtra & Ors. - [2013(7) SCALE 569],* the Hon'ble Apex Court has held that unless property is delivered to the accused person pursuant to the threat, no offence of extortion is made out. In fact, as stated earlier, the Sessions Court entertains no doubt about the offence of extortion punishable under Section 386 of the Indian Penal Code having been not made out. If

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this is so, any trial on this count of charge would only be a futility and must be avoided.

11] Of course, the learned Sessions Judge is of the view that withdrawal or removal of one count from the charge, which is for an offence punishable under Section 386 of Indian Penal Code, is not permissible as not falling within the scope and ambit of any power of the Court under Section 216 of Cr.P.C. The view, however, is not sound, rather it goes against the plain meaning of the expression "after or add to any charge" used in Section 216 of Cr.P.C. and also the legislative intent.

12] Speaking about legislative intent, I may say, if the words "any court may alter or add to any charge" are to be understood as only enabling the Court to change the form or nature of one offence so as to convert it into another offence or make addition of an offence, the understanding would agitate against the intention of the legislature. The intention of the legislature is that there must be a clear notice given to the accused of the basic facts constituting offence alleged against him so that he can defend himself effectively, that there is no delay in trial and that harassment of the accused for something which he did not do is avoided. This very intention of the legislature would be frustrated if the accused is made to stand

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trial on a charge which the court knows to be baseless.

13] Apart from what is said earlier, I would point out that the expression "alter or add" does not plainly convey that it excludes deletion or removal of one count of charge from out of several heads of charge. Under Section 2(b) of Cr.P.C., charge has been defined as including any head of charge when the charge contains more heads than one. Section 216 of Cr.P.C. invests the Court with the power to alter or add any charge at any time before the judgment is pronounced. It is significant to note here that the legislature has used singular word "charge" and not plural of it which is "charges". So according to the definition of the charge, a charge may contain just one offence or several offences. When the charge contains more than one offence, withdrawal of one of the offences from the charge so framed would not amount to withdrawal of the charge itself, but would only change the nature or form or appearance of the charge. Whenever, there is change in the form or appearance, it is termed as alteration and that is also the meaning of the word "alter" in its plain and grammatical sense. The *New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2004 Edition)*, defines the word 'alter', at Page No.43, as follows :

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1. *To cause to be different; change; modify; transform.*
2. *To castrate or spay.*
3. *To become different; change, as in character or appearance.*

This definition would sufficiently indicate that the word "alter" includes anything in the nature of removal or withdrawal, which ultimately amounts to changing the character or form of the substance from which something is removed or withdrawn, in the context of the power of the Court to alter the charge under Section 216 of Cr.P.C.

14] In the present case, what has been sought by the petitioners, is withdrawal of the charge framed against them for the offence punishable under Section 386 of the Indian Penal Code. Admittedly, this is the case wherein the charge includes more offences than one. So, if one of the offences, which is not *prima facie* made out, is withdrawn from the several heads of charge as in the present case, it would not amount to withdrawal of the charge itself, rather it would amount to change of form or character or appearance of the charge. It would have been a different matter had the legislature used the expression "charges" required to be framed against the accused persons. The legislature has used a

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singular expression "charge" and has defined this singular expression as capable of containing one or more than one offence. Therefore, removal or withdrawal of one of the offences, when the charge contains several offences, would not amount to withdrawal of the charge itself and would only amount to alteration of the charge through exercise of excision or cutting or spaying some of the offences not *prima facie* made out against the accused persons. The view taken by the learned Sessions Judge is obviously against the intention of the legislature as well as the plain and grammatical meaning conveyed by the expression "add or alter to any charge" used in Section 216(1) of Cr.P.C. and so cannot stand the scrutiny of law.

15] About the third ground of objection, I would again say, it is with substance. I find that some of the offences charged against the petitioners are joint in nature and, *prima facie,* require reframing, as apparently some of the acts have been committed at different places and different times not by the same accused persons but by different accused persons. Such joint framing of the charge, in the nature of a hotchpotch, has amounted to misjoinder of some of the heads of the charge. On this ground also, the impugned orders cannot be sustained in the eye of law.

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16] In the circumstances, I find that this writ petition deserves to be allowed and it is allowed accordingly.

i. The charge as framed against the petitioners stands quashed and set aside.

ii. The matter is remitted back to the learned trial Judge for framing of charge afresh against the petitioners after giving reasonable opportunity of hearing to both sides, in accordance with law.

iii. Rule is made absolute in the above terms.

(S.B. Shukre, J.)

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Exh - 903

In the Court of Hon'ble Chief Judicial Magistrate, Wardha

RCC number. 573/2002. fixed for 25/08/2025

State .....versus.... Sanjay Agrawal and others

Say of prosecution on exhibit no. 894

APP submit say as under-

1. Application file by the accused namely Sanjay Agrawal is against the provision of law hence strongly opposed.

2. It reveals from the record that, in the ~~instal~~ instant matter charge under section 420 and 406 was p pleased to framed by this honorable court on dated 20.9.2012. it also clear from the record that after framing of charge trial against the accused was commenced and most of the witnesses are examined by the prosecution.

3. All the contentions in the application filed by the accused are hypothetical and probable final argument in the matter.

4. It is further submitted that the accused moved instant application on the basis of misconception of interpretation of section 216 of CRPC. Further ~~mod~~ more all the ~~site~~ citation case laws mention in the application are on different fact and ~~circumses~~ circumstances of the case therefore case laws mentioned and relied by the accused are not applicable to instant case.

5. It reflect from prayer in the application of the accused that he prayed for drop or indirectly delete the charge framed against him ~~by~~ by this honorable court. There is no any provision in CrPC or BNSS regarding drop or delete charge already framed against the accused. In the instant matter charge framed against the accused before 13 years and trial was already commenced. Hence ~~weather~~ whether charge framed against the accused are made out or not and its legal position is now matter of appreciation of evidence. Therefore charge frame against the accused cannot be deleted or a drop at this stage. For this purpose prosecution relied on case law of Hon'ble supreme Court in criminal appeal number 1319/2013, Directorate of revenue intelligence versus RajKumar Arora and others.

6. It is further submitted that, offence under IPC are with different ingredients and if ingredient of said provision are attracted then then charge under that offence needs to be framed. In the instant matter the accused committed of punishable under section 420 and 406 of IPC.

Therefore after application of judicial mind this honorable court pleased to framed the charge under those section against the accused. Since the framing of charge till the examination of

number of prosecution witnesses accused has not moved any application. Now after 13 years the accused moved instant application only to prolong the trial.

7. At this stage Drop or deletion of charge amounts to indirectly discharge of the accused in any of the offence. After framing of charge there is no provision of discharge of the accused in anyway. It is further submitted that this honorable court already pleased to framed the charge against the accused under section 406 and 420 of IPC. Therefore, whether accused committed offence punishable under section 406 or 420 of IPC is the matter of appreciation of evidence. There is no any absolute bar to frame charge again the accused for the offers punishable under section 460 and 420 of IPC for same act or transaction because ingredient of both the section are different and needs to be proved with their ingredients. For this purpose prosecution relied on case law of Andhra Pradesh supreme Court in Dr nallappa Reddy Sudheer Reddy versus state of Andhra Pradesh AIRONLINE 2020 SC 48.

It is further submitted that, prosecution produced his evidence to prove the guilt of accused for the offence punishable under section 406 and 420 of IPC. Therefore, the accused either acquisited or convicted for the offers punishable for the offence committed by him.

Considering the above-mentioned grounds and law points application moved by the accused may kindly be rejected.

Wardha,

Dated 25/08/2025.

APP