

Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

WEB COPY

DATED : 31.03.2023

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE N. ANAND VENKATESH

Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

and

CrI.M.P.Nos.9546 & 12709 of 2017

1. Vadivel

S/o.Venkattan

2. Vetrivel

S/o.Shanmugam

... Appellants in CrI.A.No.668/2015/
Accused Nos.2 & 3

Gurudev

S/o.Gunaseelan

... Appellant in CrI.A.No.356/2016/
Accused No.1

Vs.

State of Tamil Nadu

represented by

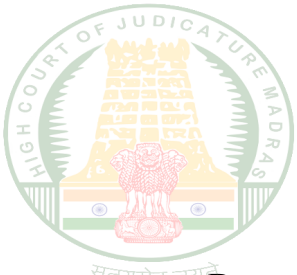
The Inspector of Police,

A.Pallipatti Police Station,

Dharmapuri District.

Crime No.326 of 2013

... Respondent/Complainant in both appeals



Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

Prayer : Criminal Appeals filed u/s.374(2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure against the judgment passed by Sessions Judge, Fast Track Mahila Court, Dharmapuri, in S.C.No.150 of 2014, dated 31.08.2015.

For Appellants
[Crl.A.No.668/2015] : Mr.M.Karthik
for Mr.M.Prabakar
[Crl.A.No.356/2016] Mr.G.Mohan
for Mr.S.Kumara Devan

For Respondent : Mr.L.Baskaran
[in both appeals] Government Advocate [Crl.side]

COMMON JUDGMENT

As both the appeals arise out of one and the same judgment, they are considered and decided by this common judgment.

2. These criminal appeals have been filed by A1 to A3 against the judgment and order passed by the Sessions Judge, Fast Track Mahila Court, Dharmapuri, in S.C.No.150 of 2014, dated 31.08.2015, convicting A2 for offence u/s.392 r/w 397 IPC and sentencing him to undergo seven years rigorous imprisonment. Insofar A1 and A3 are concerned, they were

2/16



Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

WEB COPY

convicted for offence u/s.392 r/w 397 r/w 34 IPC and each was sentenced to undergo seven years rigorous imprisonment.

3. The case of the prosecution is as follows:

3.1. On 07.11.2013, at about 03.00 p.m., when PW-1 was sitting in her house, the accused persons came to the place in a two-wheeler and A1 and A3 were watching the movements in and around at that place and A2 is said to have thrown chilli powder in the eyes of PW-1 and thereafter, had taken away the gold chain weighing four pounds. Thereafter, the accused persons escaped in the two-wheeler.

3.2. PW-1 gave a complaint [Ex.P1] before the A.Pallipatti Police Station on 07.11.2013 at about 05.00 p.m. Based on the complaint, PW-14, who was the Sub-Inspector of Police, registered the First Information Report [Ex.P8] in Crime No.326 of 2013 for offence u/s.392 IPC. The First Information Report was registered as against two unknown persons.



WEB COPY

3.3. PW-15, Inspector of Police, took up the investigation and he went to the scene of occurrence on 07.11.2013 at about 05.45 p.m. and prepared the observation mahazar marked as Ex.P4 and rough sketch marked as Ex.P9. He recorded the statement of the victim PW-1. He also enquired the neighbours and recorded their statements u/s.161(3) Cr.P.C. PW-15 in the course of investigation, arrested all the three accused persons on 25.11.2013 at about 09.00 a.m. The confession statements of all the three accused persons were recorded in the presence of witnesses PW-8 and PW-9 and the admissible portions in the confession statements of all the three accused persons were marked as Exs.P10 to P12. Based on the confession given by the accused persons, PW-15 came to know that the gold chain [MO-1] was handed over to one Anbazhagan [PW-10]. The said Anbazhagan with the help of PW-11 pledged the gold chain in the Primary Co-operative Societies Bank, Neepathandurai and had received a sum of Rs.50,000/-.

3.4. On coming to know of the same, PW-15 after recording the statements of PW-10 and PW-11, proceeded to the Co-operative Bank and



Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

WEB COPY

recovered the gold chain and also recorded the statements of PW-12 and PW-13, who are the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary working in the said Bank.

3.5. PW-15, after collecting all the concerned documents pertaining to pledging of gold chain, recorded the statements of all other witnesses and ultimately, filed the final report on 31.01.2014 before the learned District Munsif cum Judicial Magistrate, Pappireddipatti. Learned Judicial Magistrate served copies on the accused persons u/s.207 Cr.P.C. and the case was remitted u/s.209 Cr.P.C. before the Principal District and Sessions Court, Dharmapuri and it was made over to the Court below.

3.6. The Court below framed charge against A2 for offence u/s.392 r/w 397 IPC and as against A1 and A3 for offence u/s.392 r/w 397 r/w 34 IPC. When the charge was put to the accused persons, they denied the same.



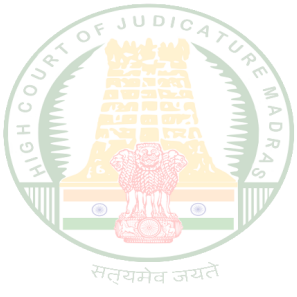
Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

WEB COPY

3.7. The prosecution examined PW-1 to PW-15 and marked Exs.P1 to P14. The incriminating evidence that was gathered during the course of trial was put to the accused persons, when they were questioned u/s.313(1)(b) Cr.P.C and they denied the same as false.

3.8. The trial Court, on considering the facts and circumstances of the case and on appreciation of oral and documentary evidence, came to a conclusion that the prosecution has made out a case beyond reasonable doubts and accordingly, convicted and sentenced the accused persons in the manner stated supra. Aggrieved by the same, these criminal appeals have been filed before this Court.

4. Heard Mr.M.Karthik and Mr.G.Mohan, learned counsel for appellants and Mr.L.Baskaran, learned Government Advocate [Crl.side], appearing for respondent/State.



WEB COPY

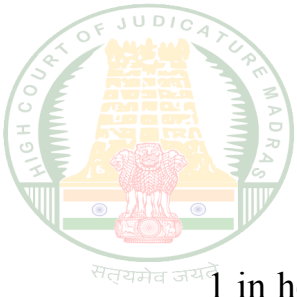


Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

5. This Court has carefully considered the submissions made on either side and the materials available on record.

6. The evidence of PW-1 gains lot of significance in this case since she is the victim from whom the gold chain was robbed by the accused persons. PW-1 while giving the complaint before the police station, has not identified any accused person by name. In one place in the complaint, she makes a reference to "கொளந்தை பேரன்". It is not clear as to whom she is referring with this expression. While registering the First Information Report, it was registered only against two unknown persons. Admittedly, no test identification parade was conducted by PW-15 in the course of investigation.

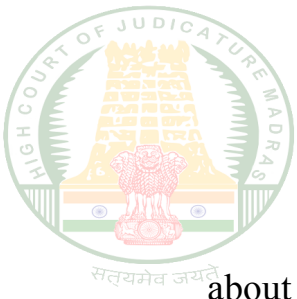
7. PW-1 while deposing before the Court did not even identify the accused persons and the prosecution did not even care to put a specific question in this regard. Unfortunately, the trial Court also did not intervene and put any question to PW-1 with regard to their identity in the Court. PW-



WEB COPY

1 in her deposition stated as if all the three accused persons came inside the house, attacked PW-1 and also thrown chilli powder in her eyes and had taken away the gold chain. Whereas, based on the materials that were placed while filing the final report, the Court below has framed the charge by stating that it was A2, who had attacked PW-1 and thrown chilli powder and taken away the gold chain. The role of A1 and A3 was only to watch the movements in and around the house. Therefore, the version given by PW-1 is not in line with the version that is found in the charge that was framed by the Court below. PW-1, in her evidence, has further stated that she knows Gurudev [A1]. If this statement made by PW-1 is taken as true, nothing prevented PW-1 from stating the name of Gurudev when the complaint was given. What was stated in the complaint was "கொளந்தை பேரன்" and there was absolutely no material to connect "கொளந்தை பேரன்" to A1.

8. The further version that was given by PW-1 was that the chilli powder was thrown in her eyes and she was thereafter taken to Government hospital and was given treatment. It was further stated that she had informed



WEB COPY

about the incident to the doctor. If this statement is taken to be true, nothing prevented the prosecution from filing the Accident Register and examining the concerned doctor, who treated PW-1.

9. PW-2 to PW-4 and PW-7 are the residents, who are living in and around the locality. These witnesses are more in the nature of *res gestae* witnesses and all of them state that they heard PW-1 shouting and when they went to the house of PW-1, they were informed by PW-1 that somebody had taken away her gold chain. They also spoke about seeing some persons rushing in a two-wheeler. PW-7 has further stated that he also went along with PW-1 to the police station when the complaint was given. These witnesses also did not identify the accused persons in the Court.

10. PW-6 had deposed that he is having a xerox shop at A.Pallipatti village and on 07.11.2013 at about 02.45 p.m., he saw three persons with a bike talking near his shop. Thereafter, he heard the news that a gold chain has been robbed from PW-1 and he rushed to the scene of occurrence. He



WEB COPY

also saw two persons rushing away in a two-wheeler. This witness also does not identify the accused persons in the Court.

11. PW-8 and PW-9, who are witnesses to speak about the arrest and recovery, turned hostile. Nothing much comes out of the evidence of these two witnesses.

12. The other crucial witness, who was examined on the side of prosecution was PW-10, who is said to have received the gold chain from A2 and pledged it in the Co-operative Bank with the help of PW-11. This witness also turned hostile and his evidence also does not in anyway help the case of the prosecution.

13. PW-11 is said to be a person who helped PW-10 to pledge the gold chain in the Co-operative Bank. PW-11 has deposed to the effect that PW-10 requested him to pledge the gold chain in the Co-operative Bank in which PW-11 was a member and accordingly, PW-11 pledged the gold chain

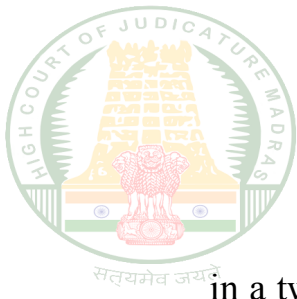


Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

WEB COPY

and handed over a sum of Rs.50,000/- to PW-10. Thereafter, PW-10 repaid the sum of Rs.50,000/- and the pledged gold chain was redeemed and handed over to PW-10. This process took place after the police came into the scene pursuant to the complaint given by PW-1. The evidence of PW-11 will help the prosecution only with respect to identity of MO-1 and the gold chain having been pledged with the Co-operative Bank. The evidence of PW-12 [Secretary of the Bank] and PW-13 [Assistant Secretary of the Bank] also helps the prosecution for the very same purpose. The evidence of PW-11 to PW-13 does not in any way help the prosecution in fixing the accused persons in this case. It must be borne in mind that a mere recovery cannot lead to conviction and sentence of accused persons unless they have been properly identified by witnesses. In other words, recovery will only be one link in the chain of circumstances and that by itself will not lead to conviction and sentence.

14. There is yet another important factor that has to be taken into consideration by this Court. The accused persons are said to have travelled



Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

WEB COPY

in a two-wheeler and had come to the place of occurrence and after robbing the gold chain, had escaped in that two-wheeler. On the confession of the accused persons, the two-wheeler is said to have been recovered along with a knife. Curiously the two-wheeler has not even been marked as a material object in this case. Hence, there was no opportunity for any of the witnesses to identify at least the two-wheeler in which the accused persons are said to have come to the scene of occurrence and escaped from there.

15. PW-15 is the investigation officer in this case. It is quite unfortunate that the investigation officer did not resort to Test Identification Parade in spite of the fact that the accused persons in this case are unknown to the victim. In his entire evidence, PW-15 does not say as to how he came to know that A1 to A3 had committed the crime. The investigation officer merely states that he heard that the accused persons were roaming around and thereafter, he arrested them and they were remanded to judicial custody. The investigation officer probably thought that mere recovery of the material object was enough to convict any person, who is shown as accused



WEB COPY

person before the Court. The accused persons were neither identified during the course of investigation nor they were identified by any of the witnesses in the Court.

16. The trial Court had proceeded further in this case merely on the basis of recovery and insofar as the identity of the accused persons is concerned, the trial Court has rendered its findings on mere surmises and assumptions. There is no question of identifying an accused person on assumptions and it involves a very important right guaranteed to any person under Article 21 of the Constitution of India and punishing a person even without proper identity, will directly impinge upon the liberty that is guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. In a case of this nature, the Court should not be swayed by mere emotions and the Court must necessarily ensure that the accused persons are properly identified. If such a procedure is not followed, anybody can be made as an accused person in a given case on mere recovery and in all probabilities, the person, who is shown as an accused will have nothing to do with the case. On many



Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

WEB COPY

occasions, the police find it convenient to bring in some habitual criminal and show him as an accused in the case. Such line of investigation should never be encouraged and just because someone is a habitual criminal, that does not mean that he must be held responsible for every crime that takes place in the society. Such attitude will cause a dent in the criminal justice system and will make the officers ineffective when they investigate serious crimes.

17. In the light of the above discussion, this Court has absolutely no hesitation to interfere with the judgment and order passed by the Sessions Judge, Fast Track Mahila Court, Dharmapuri, in S.C.No.150 of 2014, dated 31.08.2015 and accordingly, the same is set aside. The appellants are acquitted from all charges and the bail bonds executed by them shall stand discharged and fine amount, if any, paid by them shall be refunded to them.



Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

WEB COPY

In the result, these Criminal Appeals are allowed. Consequently,
connected miscellaneous petitions are closed.

31.03.2023

Index : Yes
Speaking Order / Non Speaking Order
Neutral Citation: Yes
gm

To

- 1.The Sessions Judge,
Fast Track Mahila Court,
Dharmapuri.
- 2.The Inspector of Police,
A.Pallipatti Police Station,
Dharmapuri District.
- 3.The Public Prosecutor,
High Court, Madras.



WEB COPY



Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

N. ANAND VENKATESH, J

gm

Criminal Appeal Nos.668 of 2015 & 356 of 2016

31.03.2023

16/16