
(2003) 02 SC CK 0033

In the Supreme Court Of India

Case No : Civil Appeal No. 4228 of 1992

Madanlal (Dead) by Lrs. and Others

APPELLANT

Vs

Yoga Bai (Dead) by Lrs.

RESPONDENT

Date of Decision : 24-02-2003

Acts Referred:

Citation : AIR 2003 SC 1880 : (2003) AIRSCW 1350 : (2003) 5 ALT 40 : (2003) 5 JT 221 : (2003) 2 SCALE 386 : (2003) 5 SCC 89 : (2003) 2 Supreme 308 : (2003) 2 UC 780

Hon'ble Judges : D. M. Dharmadhikari, J;Brijesh Kumar, J

Bench : Division Bench

Advocate : H.S. Gururaja Rao and T.V. Ratnam, for the Appellant; Subodh Markandeya, for Chitra Markandeya, (NP) and S. Udaya Kumar Sagar, (NP), for the Respondent

Final Decision : Allowed

Judgement

Brijesh Kumar, J.—This appeal is preferred against the judgment and order passed by the Andhra Pradesh High Court allowing the appeal of the plaintiff-respondent (herein) and setting aside the judgment and decree passed by the trial court dismissing the suit for partition.

2. It appears that one Purandas had established his business in Hyderabad after having shifted there from Burhanpur in the State of Madhya Pradesh. The business was being carried on under the name & style of Purandas Ranchhoddas & Sons. It appears that he had different businesses mainly perfume business in two places in Hyderabad. He had four sons, namely, Ranchhoddas, Dwarkadas, Motilal, Babalal and a daughter Yoga Bai. Purandas died in the year 1962. Ranchhoddas was eldest son. That being the position, Ranchhoddas continued to look after the business. Dwarkadas died in the year 1966. His wife, Purna Bai and sons Daya Bhai and Raj Kumar filed a suit for partition of the properties as joint family property impleading Ranchhoddas as the Defendant No. 1 and his sons as Defendants 2 to 5. Sons of Motilal, namely Raman Lal and Shanti Lal,

were impleaded as Defendants 7 and 8 and Yoga Bai, daughter of Purandas was impleaded as Defendant No. 9. The plaintiffs claimed 1/5th share in the property. The appellants (herein) filed their written statements denying the fact that there was any joint family property as claimed by the plaintiffs. The trial court dismissed the suit with a finding that Purandas had left Hyderabad and went back to Burhanpur in 1942 and before leaving he gave one shop at Secunderabad to his son Dwarkadas, the shop at Gulzar House, Hyderabad to his other three sons. By this arrangement, Purandas left no property in respect of which any partition could be made. The appeal preferred by the plaintiffs in the High Court has been allowed holding that plaintiff is entitled for 1/5th share in the property. The present appeal is against the judgment of the High Court.

3. This appeal stood disposed of by order dated 2.9.1994 on the basis of a compromise except as against Respondent No. 7. The respondents 1, 2 and 3 are the plaintiffs and Respondent No. 4 Motilal is son of Purandas who has died and respondents No. 5 and 6 are sons of Motilal. Respondent No. 7 is Yoga Bai, namely, the daughter of Purandas. She also died during the pendency of the case and her legal representatives have been brought on record. The position as it stands is that the appeal stands disposed of by means of a compromise between the parties including the plaintiff except in so far it related to Yoga Bai Respondent No. 7, who was defendant No. 7 in the suit. The appeal was ordered to continue in respect of Respondent No. 7. No one has turned up for Respondent No. 7, namely, the legal representatives of Yoga Bai. Legal Representatives of Respondent No. 7 have chosen not to put in appearance though served.

4. Learned counsel for the appellant has vehemently urged that the High Court while dealing with the appeal has appreciated the evidence in detail and has set aside the findings of fact recorded by the trial court. We see that it is within the scope of first appellate court to go into the question of fact and appraise the evidence available on record. The High Court has considered the statements of different witnesses who deposed during the proceedings of the suit as well as the documentary evidence. The High court considered the evidence to the effect that business was originally started by Purandas and after the birth of Ranchhoddas it was shifted to Gulzar House in the name and style of Purandas Ranchhoddas & Sons and that all the sons and the father Purandas were running the business together. The High Court particularly noted the fact that even according to the defendants prior to alleged division in 1942 entire business belonged to all of them and the income therefrom was enjoyed by all. Therefore, the High court found that the question which was to be considered was as to whether property acquired by the father and the sons by putting their efforts together in their family business would be amenable to partition at the instance of the sons or not. Referring to several decisions of different High Courts, namely, Bombay High Court, Oudh Chief Court, Madras High Court as well as Andhra Pradesh High Court on the point, it came to the conclusion that the property in question was raised and developed by the joint efforts of Purandas and his sons and therefore it was joint family property, amenable for partition among the father and sons

etc. We do not find any flaw in the conclusion drawn by the High Court on the point enumerated above.

5. The High Court has not believed the case of the defendants that there had already been a settlement in respect of the properties in question in 1942. It at least indicates that even according to the contesting defendants, some settlement of the property amongst the members of the family was necessary which had already taken place earlier i.e. to say existence of joint property cannot be denied. Once their case of settlement in respect of the same property having taken place earlier has been dis-believed, there remain hardly any ground to resist the claim of the plaintiff for partition and 1/5th share in the properties. The case of the defendant that after the settlement the brothers have been residing separately and they have been carrying on their business separately, hence there remained nothing which was joint amongst the members of the family which could be partitioned is rightly held to be untenable.

6. We find that after appreciation of the evidence the High Court has arrived at a finding that no such settlement had taken place in 1942. Learned counsel for the appellant has vehemently urged that Exhibit B-3 is the deed of settlement which should have been given due weight by the High Court while considering the evidence. He has also submitted that the High Court has not taken into account documentary evidence placed on record, namely Exhibits B-2, B-3, B-4, B-5, B-6 etc. as well as Ex.B-15 and B-16. He has also placed reliance upon the decision in Surinder Singh Vs. Hardial Singh and Others, to the effect that findings of fact recorded, ignoring the documentary evidence on record is vitiated. We find that the High Court has considered a number of documents on record except a few which may not have been considered necessary to be referred to in the judgment. The High Court has taken a note of Ex.B-3, the alleged deed of settlement executed by Purandas in 1957 and has dealt with it in detail. Referring to the statement of DW-1, the High Court has taken a note of the fact that according to him B-3 came into existence since the Government was demanding inspection of their account books. DW-1 also could not indicate the order of handing over the shop to him by Purandas prior to 1972. The settlement was said to be in 1942 and deed is executed in 1957. Taking the evidence on record as a whole the case of the defendant of settlement of properties in 1942 and the deed executed in 1957 have not been believed. We find no good reason to interfere with that finding of fact which is supported by evidence and cogent reasons. In so far the other documents, which according to the appellant have not been considered, they are some partnership deeds which have been entered into between different members of the family in different combinations. It is sought to be established that they have been running their business separately under different partnership. We feel that no such inference can be drawn. In a family which carries on a number of business, it is quite often that it is carried out under different names and styles and often constitutes different companies or partnerships for better handling of business or to keep it manageable or for various other reasons. It is no proof of separation nor are the letters which are

sought to be relied upon, written to the income tax authorities and the assessment orders passed by the income tax authorities. It has already come in evidence that even B-3 came into existence since the government wanted to inspect the account books. Therefore, once the settlement before the suit for partition was filed is not accepted by means of a finding of fact recorded by the High Court, the case of the defendant falls through.

7. As indicated earlier, the matter stands settled and disposed of by compromise among the parties except Respondent No. 7 whose legal heirs have not turned up to put in appearance. We do not find any good reason to interfere with the judgment of the High Court except to the extent as may stand modified in view of the order passed by this Court on 2nd September, 1994 to the following effect:

"Appeal is disposed of on the basis of a compromise except against respondent No. 7. Appeal shall continue in respect of respondent No. 7 and will be disposed of according to law."

8. There is no merit in the appeal, it is accordingly dismissed. Costs easy.