



**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

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CRM-A-195-2020 (O&M)
Date of decision: 12.08.2025

Subhash Chander Dhawan ...Appellant
Versus
Neeraj Ohri and another ...Respondents

CORAM: HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE AARADHNA SAWHNEY

Present : Mr. ADS Sukhija, Advocate for the appellant.

AARADHNA SAWHNEY, J.(ORAL)

1. The applicant has filed the present application seeking grant of leave to appeal against the judgment of acquittal dated 13.05.2016 passed by the learned Judicial Magistrate Ist Class, Jalandhar, in a case stemming from complaint dated 14.02.2013 filed under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 (hereinafter 'NI Act')
2. The limited question arising for consideration in the present proceedings is whether an appeal against an order of acquittal passed in a complaint case under Section 138 of the NI Act can be entertained under the proviso to Section 372 of the Cr.P.C. at the instance of the complainant?
3. The issue is no longer res integra. In '*M/s Celestium Financial Vs. A. Gnanasekaran Etc. 2025 INSC 804: 2025(3) RCR (Criminal) 208*', the Hon'ble Supreme Court authoritatively held that a complainant in a prosecution under Section 138 of the NI Act, qualifies as a 'victim' under Section 2(wa) of the Cr.P.C., being the person who suffers financial loss due to the dishonour of a cheque. Consequently, such a complainant is entitled to pursue an appeal against acquittal under the proviso to Section 372 of the Cr.P.C., without the requirement of seeking special leave under Section



378(4) of the Cr.P.C.

4. Adopting a pragmatic and justice oriented approach and guided by the principle that procedural rule must serve and not obstruct the course of justice, this Court deems it appropriate to direct that the present appeal be treated as one authoritatively instituted under the proviso to Section 372 of the Cr.P.C.

5. Therefore, in view of the judgment rendered by the Apex Court in *Celestium Financial (supra)*, the present application seeking leave to appeal is remanded back to the learned Sessions Judge, Jalandhar with a direction to treat the same as appeal filed under Section 372 of the Cr.P.C. Learned Sessions Judge may retain the said appeal on his/her Board or assign it to some other Court of competent jurisdiction.

6. The Registry is directed to transmit this order along with copy of the complete paper-book and return the trial Court record, if received, to the learned Sessions Judge, concerned.

7. Disposed of accordingly.

8. Pending application, if any, also stands disposed of.

(AARADHNA SAWHNEY)
JUDGE

12.08.2025

Hemant

Whether speaking/reasoned : Yes / No
Whether reportable : Yes / No