

2026 LiveLaw (SC) 25

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

J.B. PARDIWALA; J., K.V. VISWANATHAN; J.

SPECIAL LEAVE PETITION (CRIMINAL) Diary No.71965/2025; 08-01-2026

VIJAY KUMAR & ORS. versus THE STATE OF RAJASTHAN

Criminal Law – Delay in Trial – Pendency of Revision Petitions – Judicial Discipline – Rights of Victims - The Supreme Court expressed deep concern over a 23-year delay in the High Court of Rajasthan deciding a Criminal Revision Petition challenging an order of framing charges – Noted that the Revision Petition, filed in 2003 against charges under Sections 498A and 304B IPC, remained pending with an interim stay on trial proceedings until it was finally dismissed by the High Court in 2025 - that if trials for serious offences like murder, dowry death, and rape remain stayed for decades, it results in a "mockery of justice" - Justice must be balanced between the accused and the victim/family members - Noted that "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" - The Supreme Court requested the Chief Justices of all High Courts to ensure that petitions involving interim stays on trials, particularly in sensitive and serious matters, are prioritized and heard immediately - The Registrar General of the Rajasthan High Court was directed to provide a detailed breakup of Criminal Revision Petitions filed and disposed of between 2001 and 2026, and the State was questioned on its failure to expedite the hearing during the 23-year interregnum. [Paras 21-23, 26-30]

[Arising out of impugned final judgment and order dated 01-08-2025 in SBCRRP No. 38/2003 passed by the High Court of Judicature for Rajasthan at Jaipur]

For Petitioner(s): Mr. Abhishek Gupta, AOR Ms. Sheena Taqui, Adv.

For Respondent(s): Mr. Shiv Mangal Sharma, Sr. Adv.

ORDER

1. Delay condoned.
2. Exemption Application is allowed.
3. This litigation is very disturbing. What we are about to record is something very painful. Who is responsible, only a detailed inquiry at our end will decide.
4. The deceased namely Deepa got married to the Petitioner No.1 – herein namely Vijay Kumar on 21-11-2000. The Petitioner No.2 before us is the elder brother-in-law of the deceased. The Petitioner No.3 is the younger brother-in-law of the deceased. The Petitioner No.4 is the father-in-law of the deceased. The Petitioner No.5 is the mother-in-law of the deceased. The Petitioner No.6 is the sister-in-law of the deceased and the Petitioner No.7 is the uncle-in-law of the deceased.
5. It is not in dispute that on 31-12-2001 Deepa died at her matrimonial home in mysterious circumstances. Thus, within one year of the marriage, Deepa died at her matrimonial home.
6. On 10-1-2002, the First Information Report No.5/2002 came to be registered at Nazirabad City Police Station, District Ajmer for the offence punishable under Sections 498A and 304B of the Indian Penal Code (for short the, "IPC").
7. The FIR was lodged by Girish Goyal, brother of the deceased against the petitioners – herein. In the FIR, the brother alleged that her sister was being harassed by the

petitioners for demand of dowry. He further alleged that her sister was killed by the petitioners – herein by administering poison.

8. Upon registration of the FIR, investigation was undertaken.

9. Post-mortem of the dead body of Deepa was performed. In the post-mortem report, the Doctors opined that the exact cause of death could be assigned only after the histopathological report is received.

10. On 2-8-2002, the Police filed charge-sheet against all the seven petitioners – herein for the offences enumerated above.

11. On 15-11-2002, the Trial Court proceeded to frame charge against all the petitioners – herein for the offences enumerated above.

12. In January, 2003, the petitioners preferred Criminal Revision Petition No.38/2003 under Section 401 read with Section 397 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 seeking to challenge the order passed by the Trial Court dated 15-11-2002 framing charge.

13. The High Court by Order dated 14-2-2003 stayed the further proceedings of the trial.

14. The unfortunate events now start.

15. The Criminal Revision Petition filed by the petitioners in the year 2003 came to be taken up for hearing by the learned Single Judge of the High Court on 24-8-2023, i.e., after about 20 years.

16. On 1-3-2024, the matter was released for re-hearing and was ordered to be listed before the regular bench. On 10-7-2024, the matter was once again heard and ultimately by Order dated 1-8-2025, the High Court rejected the Criminal Revision Petition.

17. In such circumstances, referred to above, the petitioners are here before us with the present petition.

18. We heard Mr. Abhishek Gupta, the learned counsel appearing for the petitioners.

19. We have no hesitation in dismissing this petition at the threshold. We are of the view that no error not to speak of any error of law could be said to have been committed by the High Court in passing the impugned order.

20. However, the matter should not set at rest over here. There are many questions begging for answers.

21. We would like to know first and the foremost why it took 23 years for the High Court to take up the Criminal Revision Petition filed by the petitioners for hearing, more particularly when the subject matter of challenge in the Criminal Revision Petition was an order framing charge in a very sensitive and serious trial like one of dowry death.

22. We would like to examine the entire record of the proceedings. We are saying so because we are perturbed by the fact that despite an interim relief operating, why the matter was not taken up for hearing at the earliest.

23. We direct the Registrar General of the High Court of Rajasthan to forward the entire record with all the order sheets by a Special Messenger to this Court at the earliest.

24. We would also like to know from the Registrar General of the High Court as to how many Criminal Revision Petitions came to be heard and disposed of between 2001 and 2026. We want the High Court to provide us with a break up of how many criminal revision

petitions were filed in the year 2001 and how many came to be disposed of. We want this break up right up to the year 2026.

25. We would also like to know how many times the Criminal Revision Petition filed by the petitioners – herein in the High Court was notified for hearing from the date of its filing till the date it came to be dismissed.

26. We would also like to know from the State as to what steps it took as the prosecuting agency to get the Criminal Revision Petition filed by the petitioners heard at the earliest.

27. Why during this interregnum period of 23 years, the State of Rajasthan kept quiet and did not take any steps to get the Criminal Revision Petition heard and decided on merits.

28. This litigation is an eye-opener for all the High Courts across the country.

29. If criminal trials in such serious offences remain pending for years together on the strength of interim orders passed by the High Courts, it would lead to nothing but mockery of justice. Justice has to be done with all the parties. Justice cannot be done only with the accused persons. Justice has to be done even with the victim and the family members of the victim. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

30. In this regard, we request the Chief Justices of all the High Courts to ensure that the petitions wherein interim orders are passed holding up the trials should be immediately taken up for hearing, more particularly in sensitive and serious matters like murder, dowry death, rape etc.

31. Once the file is received from the High Court, we shall proceed to pass further orders. 32. List on 15-1-2026 as Part-Heard.

33. The Registry shall serve one copy each of this order at the earliest to the standing counsel appearing for the State of Rajasthan. Mr. Shiv Mangal Sharma, the learned Senior counsel appearing for the State of Rajasthan waives service of notice.

34. Mr. Abhishek Gupta, the learned counsel appearing for the petitioner may also assist us in the larger interest of justice.

35. Let a copy of this order be transmitted to Secretary Generals/Registrar Generals of all the High Courts so as to have the same placed before the Hon'ble Chief Justices.

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