

CrPC S. 253, S. 254, S. 258 - Warrant case instituted on complaint - 'discharge' or 'acquittal' - Procedure - Once a charge is framed, the Magistrate has no power under Section 227 or any other provision of the Code to cancel the charge, and reverse the proceedings to the stage of Section 253 and discharge the accused - Excepting where the prosecution must fail for want of a fundamental defect, such as want of sanction, an order of acquittal must be based upon a 'finding of not guilty' turning on the merits of the case and the appreciation of evidence at the conclusion of the trial - Order of discharge passed after framing of charge is illegal - If after framing charges the Magistrate without appraising the evidence and without permitting the prosecution to produce all its evidence, 'discharges' the accused, such an acquittal, without trial, even if clothed as 'discharge' will be illegal.

Held,

In a warrant case instituted otherwise than on a police report 'discharge' or 'acquittal' of accused are distinct concepts applicable to different stages of the proceedings in Court. The legal effect and incidents of 'discharge' and 'acquittal' are also different. An order of discharge in a warrant case instituted on complaint, can be made only after (Login to read)

the process has been issued and before the charge is framed Section 253 (1) shows that as a general rule there can be no order of discharge unless the evidence of all the prosecution witnesses has been taken and the Magistrate considers for reasons to be recorded, in the light of the evidence, that no case has been made out. Sub-sec. (2) which authorises the Magistrate to discharge the accused at any previous stage of the case if he considers the charge to be groundless, is an exception to that rule. A discharge without considering the evidence taken is illegal. If a prima facie case is made out the Magistrate must proceed under Section 254 and frame charge against the accused. Section 254 shows that a charge can be framed if after taking evidence or at any previous stage, the Magistrate, thinks that there is ground for presuming that the accused has committed an offence triable as a warrant case. [Para 26]

Once a charge is framed, the Magistrate has no power under Section 227 or any other provision of the Code to cancel the charge, and reverse the proceedings to the stage of Section 253 and discharge the accused. The trial in a warrant case starts with the framing of charge; prior to it the proceedings are only an inquiry. After the framing of charge if the accused pleads not guilty, the Magistrate is required to proceed with the trial in the manner provided in Sections 254 to 258 to a logical end. Once a charge is framed in a warrant case, instituted either on complaint or a police report, the Magistrate has no power under the Code to discharge the accused, and thereafter, he can either acquit or convict the accused unless he decides to proceed under Sections 349 and 562 of the Code of 1892 (which correspond to Sections 325 and 360 of the Code of 1973). [Para 26A]

Excepting where the prosecution must fail for want of a fundamental defect, such as want

of sanction, an order of acquittal must be based upon a 'finding of not guilty' turning on the merits of the case and the appreciation of evidence at the conclusion of the trial. [Para 26B]

If after framing charges the Magistrate whimsically, without appraising the evidence and without permitting the prosecution to produce all its evidence, 'discharges' the accused, such an acquittal, without trial, even if clothed as 'discharge' will be illegal. [Para 27]

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