

**ROBERTO LAPERAL, JR. AND PURIFICACION M. LAPERAL,
PLAINTIFFS AND APPELLEES, VS. RAMON L. KATIGBAK, ET AL.,
DEFENDANTS. EVELINA KALAW-KATIGBAK, DEFENDANT AND
APPELLANT.**

G. R. No. L-16951. February 28, 1962

Ponente: LABRADOR, J.

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LABRADOR, J.:

Appeal from an order of the Court of First Instance of Manila, the Hon. Magno Gatmaitan presiding, holding that the decision rendered by this Court in G. R. No. L-4299,[*] promulgated January 31, 1952, dismissing the action instituted by Roberto Laperal, Jr. and Purification M. Laperal against Ramon L. Katigbak and Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak, Civil Case No. 11767 of the Court of First Instance of Manila, insofar as Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak was concerned does not bar the present action, Civil Case No. 25235, and finally deciding this latter case, and sentencing Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak to pay unto plaintiffs one-half of the sum of P14,000, with legal interest and one-half of P97,500, also with legal interest.

A review of the facts and circumstances involved, as well as the proceedings had in the case at bar and in G. R. No. L-4299, is necessary for an understanding of the issues involved. G. R. No. L-4299, Laperal, et al., vs. Katigbak, et al., was filed in the Court of First Instance of Manila as Civil Case No. 11767, to collect the sum of P14,000, with interest, and another sum of P97,500, also with interest, against the defendants spouses Ramon L. Katigbak and Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak. The complaint alleges as causes of action that defendants are husband and wife; that from March 1, 1950 to May 31, 1950, the husband Ramon L. Katigbak borrowed and received various sums of money from plaintiffs amounting to P14,000; that on the same dates defendant Ramon L. Katigbak received from plaintiffs jewelry valued at P97,500; that notwithstanding demands made upon them they have failed to pay the same. The promissory notes constituting the first amount of P14,000 was signed by Ramon L. Katigbak alone; he also signed a receipt for a jewelry the value of which totals P97,500, alone. Defendant Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak thereupon filed a motion to dismiss on the ground that since the receipts for the amount borrowed, as well as for the jewelry received, were signed by Ramon L. Katigbak alone and without the concurrence of his wife, the latter is not liable for the reason that she is not bound by obligations contracted by her husband nor answerable in a suit for the enforcement thereof. The court trying the case granted the motion to dismiss on the ground that since the wife did not take part in the execution of the documents sued upon, she is not responsible therefor. The above resolution of the lower court was appealed to this Court, which on January 31, 1952, affirmed the order of dismissal of the action against Evelina Kalaw Katigbak. We held, as to the first cause of action that as the notes were not signed by Evelina, the latter is not personally liable, as the husband was not her agent; as to the second cause of action, that as it is not alleged that the obligation contracted redounded to the benefit of the family, the same rule applies, because the receipts for jewelry were not also signed by Evelina.

On February 10, 1955, plaintiffs filed another action, Civil Case No. 25235, against the same spouses, alleging that in the previous case, No. 11767, defendant Ramon L. Katigbak confessed judgment, as a result of which said

defendant was ordered to pay P14,000, with interest, and P97,500, also with interest until full payment. The other principal allegations of the complaint are: that defendants were married since September 11, 1938; that they did not execute any ante-nuptial contract before the celebration of their marriage, so that they entered the marriage under the system of conjugal partnership; that on December 18, 1950, Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak filed an action for judicial separation of property and separate administration by the wife; that on September 25, 1951, the defendants submitted an agreement of facts wherein the parties to the action agreed to dissolve the conjugal partnership; that all the proceedings and steps leading to the dissolution of the conjugal partnership were made without notice to the creditors of the conjugal partnership and especially the plaintiffs herein and that said agreement was made to defraud creditors and, therefore, void; that a certain real property on Evangelista Street, City of Manila, described under Certificate of Title No. 57626, although in the name of Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak, is in truth and in fact conjugal partnership property of the spouses, and at least the fruits thereof are conjugal partnership property; that a theatre known as Center Theatre on Quezon Boulevard, registered in the name of Teodoro Kalaw, Jr., is Evelina Katigbak- Kalaw's property, the fruits of which are also conjugal partnership property; that of the amount of the judgment plus 6% interest totalling P141,047.50, only P20,000 has been paid, leaving a balance of P121,047.50 still unpaid.

As second cause of action it is alleged that the fruits of the conjugal partnership properties, as well as the fruits of the paraphernal property of Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak belonged to the conjugal partnership; that plaintiff's cause of action arose before the effectivity of the New Civil Code and, therefore, their liability as above described is chargeable against the conjugal partnership of Katigbak and Kalaw, including the fruits of the paraphernal property of the wife; that demand was made by plaintiffs upon the defendant Katigbak as well as on defendant Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak, on the fruits of the properties mentioned hereinbefore, but neither one nor the other paid the same.

In the prayer it is demanded that the proceedings for the judicial separation of the properties of the spouses be declared null and void or inefficacious against the plaintiffs; that Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak be sentenced to render an accounting and turn over to plaintiffs the net fruits of the Center Theatre, the property covered by TCT No. 57626 and all other properties, as well as the fruits of the paraphernal properties of Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak, until the full amount of the judgment be paid. The last prayer is that the property covered by TCT No. 57626 and improvements thereon, be declared conjugal partnership property subject to the indebtedness in favor of the plaintiffs.

Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak answered the complaint denying the allegations as to the existence of conjugal partnership properties alleged in the complaint and the imputation to her that her properties were fraudulently registered in the name of others. As special defenses, she alleges "that as a matter of fact, the answering defendant in this case who was impleaded as one of the defendants in Civil Case No. 11767 of the Court of First Instance of Manila was absolved from said complaint which was dismissed insofar as it concerns her; said dismissal having been confirmed by the Supreme Court;" that she does not have in her possession property belonging to the conjugal partnership nor fruits thereof derived from any paraphernal property, which may be considered as conjugal; and that the fruits of any of her own properties belonged to her, and neither her husband nor creditors have any interest therein. As a counterclaim it is alleged that plaintiffs have registered a notice of lis pendens in the office of the register of deeds of Manila on TCT No. 25626, thus causing her damage to the extent of P10,000. She prays for a dismissal of the complaint and that the plaintiffs be sentenced to pay the amount of her counterclaim. On August 31, 1956, the Court of First Instance of Manila rendered a decision on the issues presented by the answer of the defendants in the following language:

"One of the points in debate is whether plaintiffs have the right to insist that notwithstanding the decree of judicial separation in Civil Case No. 12860 they can secure a pronouncement from this Court to the effect that

the conjugal properties the spouses Ramon Katigbak and Evelina Kalaw should answer for the judgment secured by plaintiff against Ramon Katigbak; and in that eventuality what properties should be made to answer therefor. Defendant Evelina Kalaw contends that the decision of the Supreme Court absolving her of liability in Civil Case No. 11767 would be enough to bar the present action as against her; the Court does not concur; for what was decided in that case was whether on the promissory notes signed by Ramon Katigbak, Evelina Kalaw could be personally liable with her paraphernal properties and the Supreme Court said that she could not; it was not there decided whether the conjugal property, and this would include the fruits of the paraphernal, could not be liable; in fact a reading of the decision of the Supreme Court would show that the ratio decidendi there was that her husband alone was liable with his private funds and at most the assets of the conjugal partnership, * * *."

The court further held that for the reason that no proof was submitted to show that the obligations contracted by Ramon Katigbak redounded to the benefit of the family, the obligation subject of the complaint could not be enforced upon the paraphernal properties or the fruits thereof, although they could be enforced upon the conjugal partnership property; that since the Civil Code has been amended and "the exemption from liability for personal obligations of the husband is a right given to the conjugal partnership for the first time by the amendment in the new Code, it should be operative at once, unless it should impair a right vested under the old legislation (Art. 2253), New Civil Code. But the right of the Laperals so far as the judgment against Ramon Katigbak is concerned is one thing and their right to proceed against the conjugal properties of Ramon and Evelina is another, the first one was a property right vested under the Old Code; the second was a right also under that but one that had not yet vested before the New Code came into being. AH vested rights are property but not all rights are, the Legislature can come in and destroy rights not yet vested without impairment of due process. Perhaps the case can be illustrated by analogy to Article 2261 of the New Civil Code; the legislator there has decreed that exemptions from liability under Article 302 were operative at once; and as this is a case analogous it should under Article 2269, be solved in the same manner. The result will be a dismissal." Hence the court dismissed the action, without costs.

The above decision of the court was appealed to Us in G. R. No. L-11418[*] In this Court, the plaintiffs Roberto Laperal, Jr. and Purification M. Laperal assigned the following errors:

THE COURT BELOW ERRED IN HOLDING THAT THE OBLIGATIONS INCURRED BY KATIGBAK DID NOT REDOUND TO THE BENEFIT OF THE FAMILY OF KATIGBAK AND KALAW.

THE COURT BELOW ERRED IN HOLDING THAT THE OBLIGATIONS INCURRED BY KATIGBAK CANNOT BE ENFORCED AGAINST THE FRUITS OF THE PARAPHERNAL PROPERTY OF KALAW.

THE COURT BELOW ERRED IN NOT REQUIRING KALAW TO ACCOUNT AND PAY TO THE LAPERALS THE NET FRUITS OF THE CENTER THEATER BUILDING ON QUEZON BOULEVARD, MANILA AND OF OTHER PARAPHERNAL PROPERTY OF KALAW IN SATISFACTION OF DECISION IN FAVOR OF THE LAPERALS." (G. R. No. L-11418, R.O.A., pp. 11-12.)

The defendants Ramon L. Katigbak and Evelina Kalaw-Katigbak did not appeal from the decision of the lower court, evidently because the case against them was dismissed by the lower court. In the decision rendered by Us in the appealed case, the matters considered are those raised in the briefs of the plaintiffs-appellants. After considering those points we held:

"The question is whether or not any vested or acquired right is involved in the instant case. The answer, in our opinion, is in the affirmative. When the Laperals granted the loans and delivered the jewelry to Katigbak to be paid and accounted for by him, the law then in force (Article 1408, Old Civil Code) made the conjugal partnership liable for the obligation. In other words, in giving the loan and delivering the jewelry to Katigbak, the Laperals, for purposes of security and assurances, presumably or undoubtedly looked to the conjugal

properties as security to answer for the obligation, should Katigbak fail to make good his undertaking. Stated differently, the Laperals acquired a sort of lien on said conjugal properties. * * * The right of the Laperals vested at the very moment the obligation was contracted, under the provisions of the Old Civil Code. For this reason, the provisions of Article 161 of the New Civil Code cannot apply, and the trial court erred in applying the same.

"However, our holding does not write a finis to the case. Because the trial court held that the conjugal partnership was not liable, it naturally, saw no reason or necessity for ruling upon the other issues involved, such as the legality of the proceedings in Civil Case No. 12860 for the dissolution of the conjugal partnership, and whether or not the property covered by Transfer Certificate of Title 27626 belongs to the conjugal partnership.

"In conclusion, we hold that while the fruits of the paraphernal property of Kalaw are not liable for the enforcement of the obligation contracts by Katigbak, nevertheless, the conjugal properties are." (G. R. No. L-11418, pp. 16-18 Decision.)

When the case was returned to the trial court for determination of the issues of facts pointed out by Us in our decision, the judge, after trial, rendered the Judgment appealed from in this, case, which is as follows:

"with the finding that this property is paraphernal, what only remains is to apply as plaintiffs desire, the rule in National Bank vs. Quintos, 46 Phil. 370 under that, it was held that the spouses are subsidiarily liable with their private properties in the event of insolvency of the conjugal assets; there is no showing why that rule should not apply here; we should therefore apply it since the insolvency is clear; the result will be a judgment against Evelina for one-half (1/2) of the credit already settled in the decision.

"IN VIEW WHEREOF, judgment is rendered condemning Evelina Kalaw to pay the plaintiffs the sum of one-half (1/2) of P14,000.00 with legal interest from August 8, 1950 until fully paid, plus another one-half (1/2) of P97,500.00 also with legal interest from August 8, 1950 until full payment." (G. R. No. L-16951, R. O. A. pp. 95-96)

Upon the appeal to Us the defendant-appellant assigned the following errors:

I

THE COURT A QUO ERRED IN CONDEMNING KALAW TO PAY ONE-HALF OF THE CLAIMS OF THE LAPERALS, IT HAVING BEEN FINALLY AND CONCLUSIVELY DECIDE BY THE SUPREME COURT IN DECISION 1-B (G. R. NO. L-4299, JANUARY 31, 1952) AND DECISION III-A (G. R. NO. L-11418. DECEMBER 27, 1958) THAT KALAW. NOR HER PARAPHERNAL PROPERTY OR ITS FRUITS. IS NOT LIABLE FOR KATIGBAK'S PERSONAL OBLIGATION IN FAVOR OF THE LAPERALS.

II

THAT THE COURT A QUO ERRED IN APPLYING TO THIS CASE THE DOCTRINE OF NATIONAL BANK VERSUS QUINTOS, 46 PHIL. 370, THE FACTS AND THE LAW INVOLVED IN SAID CASE BEING ABSOLUTELY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN THIS CASE.

III

THE COURT A QUO ERRED IN SENTENCING KALAW TO PAY ONE-HALF OF THE CLAIM OF THE LAPERALS, SAID PRONOUNCEMENT BEING NOT INCLUDED WITHIN THE DIRECTIVE OF THE SUPREME COURT IN DECISION III-A, REMANDING THE CASE TO THE LOWER COURT FOR FURTHER PROCEEDINGS.

IV

THE LOWER COURT ERRED IN SENTENCING KALAW TO PAY ONE-HALF OF THE CLAIMS OF THE LAPERALS FOR THE REASON THAT SAID REMEDY IS NOT SOUGHT IN THIS ACTION NOR COVERED BY THE ALLEGATIONS OF COMPLAINT.

V

THE COURT A QUO ERRED IN DECLARING THE DECISION IN CASE II AS "NOT EFFECTIVE" IN SO FAR AS THE LAPERALS ARE CONCERNED.

VI

THE COURT A QUO ERRED IN NOT ALLOWING KALAW TO ESTABLISH THAT THE "AGREEMENT OF FACTS" IN CASE II WAS PROMPTED, NOT BY THE DESIRE OF THE PARTIES, BUT BY THE SUGGESTION OF THE presiding judge OF the court." (Brief of Defendant-Appellant' pp. 1-2).

It will be seen that the first error assigned is the ruling of the trial court in its first decision, which is that the present action, which is the second one, is barred by the judgment rendered by Us in G. R. No. L-4299, entitled Roberto Laperal, Jr. and Purificacion M, Laperal, plaintiffs-appellants versus Ramon L. Katigbak and Evelina Katigbak, defendants-appellees.[*] The legal provision involved in this supposed error is known as the bar by former judgment or estoppel by former judgment, as set forth in Section 44, Rule 39 of the Rules of Court. This section should be distinguished from Section 45 of the same Rule, which is as follows:

"Section 45.—That only is deemed to have been adjudged in a former judgment which appears upon its face to have been so adjudged, or which was actually and necessarily included therein or necessary thereto."

The distinction between the first rule, which is the rule of bar by former judgment, and the second one, which is the rule of collusiveness of judgment, has been set forth by Mr. Justice Carson in *Peñalosa vs. Tuason*, 22 Phil., 303, thus:

* * * * *

"The subject of res judicata or estoppel by judgment as known to Anglo-American jurisprudence is governed by two main rules uniformly recognized by the authorities, which are very distinctly laid down and defined by Mr. Justice Field in the following citation from his opinion in the case of *Cromwell vs. Sac County* (94 U. S., 351):

"In considering the operation of this judgment, it should be borne in mind, as stated by counsel, that there is a difference between the effect of a judgment as a bar or estoppel against the prosecution of a second action upon the same claim or demand, and its effect as an estoppel in another action between the same, parties upon a different claim or cause of action. In the former case, the judgment, if rendered upon the merits, constitutes an absolute bar to a subsequent action. It is a finality as to the claim or demand in controversy, concluding parties and those in privity with them, not only as to every matter which was offered and received to sustain or defeat the claim or demand, but as to any other admissible matter which might have been offered for that purpose. Thus for example; a judgment rendered upon a promissory note is conclusive as to the validity of the instrument and the amount due upon it, although it be subsequently alleged that perfect defenses actually existed, of which no proof was offered, such as forgery, want of consideration, or payment. If such defenses were not presented in the action, and established by competent evidence, the subsequent allegation of their existence is of no legal consequence. The judgment is as conclusive, «o far as future proceedings at law are concerned, as though the defenses never existed. The language, therefore, which is so often used, that a

judgment estops not only as to every ground of recovery or defense actually presented in the action, but also as to every ground which might have, been presented, is strictly accurate, when applied to the demand or claim in controversy. Such demand or claim, having passed into judgment, cannot again be brought into litigation between the parties in proceedings at law upon any ground whatever.

"But where the second action between the same parties is upon a different claim or demand, the judgment in the prior action operates as an estoppel only as to those matter in issue or points controverted upon the determination of which the finding or verdict was rendered. In all cases, therefore, where it is sought to apply the estoppel of a judgment rendered upon one cause of action to matters arising in a suit upon a different cause of action, the inquiry must always be as to the point or question actually litigated and determined in the original action; not what might have been thus litigated and determined. Only upon such matters is the judgment conclusive in another action.

"The rules thus referred to in the opinion of Mr. Justice Field may be summarily stated as follows:

- A judgment rendered by a court of competent jurisdiction on the merits is a bar to any future suit between the same parties or their privies upon the same cause of action so long as it remains unreversed.
- A point which was actually and directly in issue in a former suit and was there judicially passed upon and determined by a domestic court of competent jurisdiction cannot be again drawn in question in any future action between the same parties or their privies, even when the causes of action in the two suits are wholly different.

"These two main rules mark a sharp distinction between the principles governing the two typical cases in which a judgment may operate as evidence. No intelligent discussion of the subject of *res judicata* or of the multitude of authorities and varying statutes touching that subject can be maintained without keeping clearly in mind the distinction between the principles governing these two typical cases. Indeed, in speaking of these cases the term 'bar by former judgment' is uniformly employed to indicate the case governed by the first general rule above laid down; and the phrase 'conclusiveness of the judgment' in referring to the second." (Peñalosa vs. Tuazon, 22 Phil., 303, 311-313).

As stated in the above-quoted decision the issue depends upon the following question: Is the claim or demand made in the second action, Civil Case No. 25235, the same as the demand made in the original case, Civil Case No. 11767. The trial court held that the second cause of action is a different demand or claim, because what was decided in the original case No. 11767 is whether or not Evelina Kalaw Katigbak could be held responsible with her paraphernal properties for the promissory notes and the other obligation signed by Ramon Katigbak. We hold that the trial court committed error in this respect; for the original claim or demand made upon the spouses Katigbak and Kalaw was to hold them liable for the said promissory notes and obligation. The prayer in the complaint of the original case No. 11767 demands that a writ of attachment issue against the properties of the defendants, or any of them, and for any other relief as may be legal and equitable. In this previous case, No. 11767, the claim or demand was to make Evelina Kalaw Katigbak liable in any capacity whatsoever, whether personally or with her conjugal properties, or with the fruits of her paraphernal property. If Evelina Kalaw Katigbak was not responsible in any manner under the cause of action, there is no cause or reason why she could still be made responsible for the supposed fruits of her paraphernal property. As indicated in the above quoted decision of ours in the case of *Peñalosa vs. Tuason*, *supra*, the previous case No. 11767, is final not only as to Evelina Kalaw Katigbak's personal liability for the obligations sought to be enforced, but as to the liability of the properties of the conjugal partnership or of the fruits of Evelina Kalaw Katigbak's paraphernal properties. In the language of that decision, the judgment in the previous case No. 11767 "estops not only as to every ground of recovery or defense actually presented in the action, but also as to every ground which might have been presented." The reason for the rule is because the demand or claim on the obligations having passed into judgment, the said claim or demand "cannot again be brought into litigation between the parties in proceedings at

law upon any ground whatever."

The trial court seems to have believed that the original action is limited to making Evelina Kalaw Katigbak personally responsible for the obligations and that the subsequent suit, which is to make the conjugal properties or the fruits of the paraphernal property responsible, is of a different nature. This view is incorrect. The demand or claim has always been against both spouses, not only personally but also to make their properties or the fruits thereof responsible. The prayer of the complaint is to make all their properties liable. An action to make a wife personally responsible is not different from one to make the paraphernal property of the wife subject to the same obligation. But assuming that there is some difference, section 3 of Rule 2 of the Rules of Court, prohibits multiplicity of suits, and any party is prohibited from dividing the causes of action that he has upon the same claim or demand, or pursuing the remedies to which he is entitled by virtue of the demand in one suit after another. The first action was to make Evelina Kalaw Katigbak and her properties responsible, and the second, was to make the fruits of her paraphernal property responsible. Both actions are against Evelina Kalaw Katigbak on the same claim and demand. The rule prohibiting multiplicity of suits prohibits Evelina Kalaw from being sued personally in one suit then and making the fruits of her paraphernal property responsible subsequently in another.

It is argued on behalf of the plaintiffs-appellees than our decision in G. R. No. L-11418, to the effect that the conjugal properties of Evelina Kalaw and her husband are responsible—

"In conclusion, we hold that while the fruits of the paraphernal property of Kalaw are not liable for the enforcement of the obligation contracted by Katigbak, nevertheless, the conjugal properties are." (Record, p. 91; Italics ours; p. 4, Brief for Plaintiffs-Appellees).

is the ratio decidendi of the case, evidently meaning, that the question of bar by former judgment was passed upon by Us unfavorably. It is true that the court did not consider the question of bar by former judgment raised by defendant Kalaw in the case, but the reason why we did not pass upon the same was because there was no occasion, no such question being raised on appeal; Evelina Kalaw having won the suit in the court below, there was no necessity for her to raise that question in the brief. Besides, our decision, by declaring that the conjugal partnership of the spouses are responsible, decided the main issue raised in the appeal by spouses Laperals. We could not have passed upon the issue of bar by former judgment because that was not the issue on appeal and we did not have to decide it any way, because there was no need to do so, as the case was being returned to the lower court for determination of certain facts arising from questions raised on the appeal, which questions refer to those raised by the appellants Laperal in that case.

Furthermore, our decision in said case, G. R. No. L-11418, cannot be considered in deciding the question of bar by former judgment because, according to the rule of conclusiveness of judgment, that which can be considered as decided is what was actually decided in the case, in accordance with Section 45 of Rule 39, Rules of Court. In other words, nothing having been stated by Us in our decision in L-11418 on the matter of bar by former judgment, said decision can not be considered as having ruled upon said rule adversely in the appeal of Evelina Kalaw in the present case.

In view of our resolution on the defense of bar by former judgment against the action, it is unnecessary to consider the other questions involved in the appeal.

For the foregoing considerations the order appealed from is hereby set aside and defendant Evelina Kalaw Katigbak absolved from the action. Without costs. So ordered.

Bengzon, C. J., Padilla, Bautista Angelo, Concepcion, Reyes, J. B. L., Barrera, Paredes, Dizon, and De Leon, JJ., concur.

[*] Laperal vs. Katigbak, 90 Phil., 770.

[*] Laperal vs. Katigbak, 104 Phil., 999; 56 Off. Gaz., [18] 3394.

[*] 90 Phil., 770.

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