

HIGH COURT OF CHHATTISGARH, BILASPUR**CRMP No. 2624 of 2018**

- Shambhu Kumar S/o Shri Ramnarayan Singh, Aged About 46 Years R/o Indrapuri Road No. 1, House No. 61, P.S. Pataliputra, District Patna (Bihar)

---- **Petitioner**

Versus

- State Of Chhattisgarh Through The Station House Officer, Police Station Sihawa, District Dhamtari Chhattisgarh

---- **Respondent**

For Petitioner : Shri R.K. Gomasta, Advocate

For Respondent/State : Shri Anant Bajpai, P L

Hon'ble Shri Justice Goutam Bhaduri**Order On Board****06/03/2019**

1. Heard.
2. The present petition is against the order dated 30.10.2018 passed by the Special Judge (N.D.P.S. Act) Dhamtari, District Dhamtari in Special Criminal Case No.85/2018, whereby the application filed by the petitioner for release of the vehicle under Section 20(b) (ii) (c) of the NDPS Act was dismissed.
3. As per the prosecution case, on 27.03.2018 a vehicle bearing No.J.H.10/B.G./3333 was intercepted and from the said vehicle 142 KG cannabis was recovered. Subsequently, it was found that the original registration number of the vehicle was B.R.01/C.Z./0021, wherein by change of

number the vehicle was used. Subsequently, the application was filed for custody of the vehicle, which was dismissed.

4. Learned counsel for the petitioner submits that the petitioner is the owner of the vehicle and the vehicle was looted on 09.02.2018 from Jharkhand for which a separate report was made, which would be evident from the document which is placed on record. He further submits that the said vehicle was used in the transportation of the cannabis and the present petitioner was not aware of the fact that the vehicle was being used for such offence and no purpose would be served to keep the vehicle in the open, therefore, the vehicle may be released.
5. Per contra, learned State counsel opposes the prayer made by the petitioner.
6. Sections 60 and 63 of the NDPS Act reads as under:-

60. Liability of illicit drugs, substances, plants, articles and conveyances to confiscation-

(1) Whenever any offence punishable under this Act has been committed, the narcotic drug, psychotropic substance, controlled substance, opium poppy, coca plant, cannabis plant, materials, apparatus and utensils in respect of which or by means of which such offence has been committed, shall be liable to confiscation.

(2) Any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance or controlled substances lawfully produced, imported inter-State, exported inter- State, imported into India, transported, manufactured, possessed, used, purchased or sold along with, or in addition to, any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance or controlled substances which is liable to confiscation under sub-section (1) and the receptacles, packages and coverings in which any narcotic drug or psychotropic substances or

controlled substances, materials, apparatus or utensils liable to confiscation under sub-section (1) is found, and the other contents, if any, of such receptacles or packages shall likewise be liable to confiscation. (3) Any animal or conveyance used in carrying any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance or controlled substance, or any article liable to confiscation under sub-section (1) or sub-section (2) shall be liable to confiscation, unless the owner of the animal or conveyance proves that it was so used without the knowledge or connivance of the owner himself, his agent, if any, and the person-in-charge of the animal or conveyance and that each of them had taken all reasonable precautions against such use.

63. Procedure in making confiscations.-(1) In the trial of offence under this Act, whether the accused is convicted or acquitted or discharged, the court shall decide whether any article or thing seized under this Act is liable to confiscation under Section 60 or section 61 or section 62 and, if it decides that the article is so liable, it may order confiscation accordingly.

(2) Where any article or thing seized under this Act appears to be liable to confiscation under section 60 or section 61 or section 62, but the person who committed the offence in connection therewith is not known or cannot be found, the court may inquire into and decide such liability, and may order confiscation accordingly:

Provided that no order of confiscation of an article or thing shall be made until the expiry of one month from the date of seizure, or without hearing any person who may claim any right thereto and the evidence, if any, which he produces in respect of his claim:

Provided further that if any such articles or thing, other than a narcotic drug, psychotropic substance, or controlled substance, the opium poppy, coca plant or cannabis plant is liable to speedy and natural decay, or if the court is of the opinion that its sale would be for the benefit of its

owner, it may at any time direct it to be sold; and the provisions of this sub-section shall, as nearly as may be practicable, apply to the net proceeds of the sale.

7. Section 60 of the NDPS Act lays down that any conveyance used for carrying narcotic drugs shall be liable to confiscation and Section 63 of the NDPS Act prescribes the procedure for confiscation. Reply of the State would show that confiscation proceeding has not been commenced. Predominantly, it is stated that since the vehicle was used for transporting the Cannabis, therefore, it should not be released. Sections 60 and 63 of the NDPS Act reveals that there is no prohibition for handing over the interim custody of the vehicle used for transporting the contraband drugs. So for all practical purposes as would appear that the vehicle is lying at the disposal of the authorities or at police station. Therefore, if it is kept in the police station it must be occupying space or is prone to cause natural decay and may lose its road worthiness when kept in stationery position. In context of subject matter the principle laid down in case of ***General Insurance Council and others Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh and others*** reported in ***(2010) 6 SCC 768*** which has earlier reiterated principle laid down in case of ***Sunderbhai Ambalal Desai Vs. State of Gujarat*** reported in ***(2002) 10 SCC 283***, wherein it is held that keeping the vehicle in stationery position at the police station would not serve any purpose except the decay of its value interim custody of the vehicle can be handed over. Reply of the State is silent as to whether any confiscation proceeding has been commenced or not. In the facts of this case, keeping the vehicle for period indefinite in police station will destroy very nature of the vehicle as it

may turn junk in future. Therefore, I am inclined to allow the application for interim custody of the vehicle.

8. In the result, order dated 30.10.2018 is quashed and the petition is allowed. The vehicle is directed to be released to the petitioner on the following conditions:-

1. Before release of vehicle proper panchnama be prepared.
2. Photographs of vehicle should be taken and bond should also be produced that the article would be produced if required at the time of trial.
3. Proper security i.e. personal bond of Rs. 5 lakhs and like sum of local surety be obtained before release of vehicle.

Sd/-

Goutam Bhaduri
Judge

Ashu