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

CRWP-9257-2021

Date of decision : 24.09.2021

Charnjit Singh

...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab and others

...Respondents

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VIKAS BAHL

Present: Mr. Surinder Gandhi, Advocate for the petitioner.

(Through Video Conferencing)

VIKAS BAHL, J. (ORAL)

Prayer in the present Criminal Writ Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India is for issuance of a writ in the nature of habeas corpus directing the respondents to release the detenues which have been detailed in para 4 of the petition and to free them from the illegal bondage of respondent Nos.4 and 5.

It has been averred in the petition that the petitioner alongwith his six close relatives which have been detailed in para 4 of the petition, were illegally detained by respondent Nos.4 and 5 and their wages have also not been paid. With great difficulty, the petitioner was able to run away but however, the said six persons are still been illegally detained. It is submitted that the detenues are being compelled to work against their wishes without

being paid any wages and they are being abused and beaten up mercilessly and thus, accordingly, respondent Nos.4 and 5 have committed the offence under the Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1976 (hereinafter to be referred as “the Act of 1976”).

It has been held by this Court in “**Murti versus The State of Punjab and others**”, **LPA No. 32 of 2013**, as under:-

“It may be mentioned here that the allegations of the appellant in the writ petition are that the alleged detainees mentioned in para No.3 of the writ petition who are working as labourers at the brick kiln of respondent Nos.4 & 5 are being kept as bonded labours. There can indeed be no doubt that if a labourer has been detained as bonded labour, it amounts to an offence under Sections 16 & 17 of the Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1976. We, however, clarify that the aforesaid observation does not mean that the allegations levelled by the appellant have been accepted. Suffice it to observe that under the Act, the District Magistrate is under statutory obligation to hold a fact finding enquiry as and when a complaint alleging violation of the provisions of Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1976 is received. Since the appellant in the instant case has specifically averred that the persons mentioned in para No.3 of the writ petition have been detained as bonded labourers, we allow this appeal and set aside/modify the order dated 9.1.2013 passed by the learned Single Judge to the extent that the petitioner's writ petition is disposed of with a direction to the District Magistrate, Sangrur, to treat this writ petition as a complaint under the 1976 Act and take immediate action in accordance with law, within a period of one week from the date of receiving a certified copy of this order alongwith a copy of the writ petition.”

Accordingly, the present Criminal Writ Petition is disposed of with direction to District Magistrate, District Amritsar-respondent No.2 to treat this petition as a complaint under the Act of 1976 and take immediate action in accordance with law, within a period of one week from the date of receipt of certified copy of this order alongwith copy of the writ petition.

24.09.2021

Pawan

**(VIKAS BAHL)
JUDGE**

Whether speaking/reasoned:-

Yes/No

Whether reportable:-

Yes/No