

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

CRM-M-10545-2022

Date of decision : 16.03.2022

Manjinder Kaur @ Sona

...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VIKAS BAHL

Present: Mr. Ghulam Nabi Malik, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. Sarabjit Singh Cheema, AAG, Punjab.

(Through Video Conferencing)

VIKAS BAHL, J. (ORAL)

Prayer in the present petition is for grant of regular bail to the petitioner in FIR No.9 dated 20.01.2022 registered under Section 22 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter to be referred as “the NDPS Act”) (Sections 29, 61, 85 of the NDPS Act have been added later on) at Police Station Sadar Ahmedgarh, District Malerkotla.

Learned counsel for the petitioner has submitted that in the present case, no recovery has been effected from the petitioner and the petitioner has been falsely implicated only on account of the fact that recovery of 1012 loose intoxicant capsules has been effected from her husband Kuldeep Ram who was apprehended by the police. It is further

submitted that the petitioner has been implicated in the case solely on the basis of disclosure statement of co-accused. He has relied upon the judgment passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Tofan Singh Vs. State of Tamil Nadu**, reported as **2021(1) RCR (Criminal) 1**, an order passed by Coordinate Bench of this Court dated 17.06.2020 in CRM-M-12051-2020 titled "**Mewa Singh Vs. State of Punjab**", and an order of another Coordinate Bench dated 16.07.2021 passed in **CRM-M-12997-2020** titled as "**Daljit Singh Vs. State of Haryana**" to contend that disclosure statement of co-accused in police custody is inadmissible in evidence. It has further been submitted that co-accused Vidya Devi, who is the mother-in-law of the petitioner and is similarly placed as the petitioner, has been granted anticipatory bail vide order dated 14.02.2022 passed in CRM-M-6165-2022. It has further been submitted that the petitioner has been in custody since 28.01.2022 and the trial is likely to take time moreso, in view of the present pandemic.

Notice of motion.

On advance notice, Mr. Sarabjit Singh Cheema, AAG, Punjab, appears and accepts notice on behalf of the State and has submitted that he is fully prepared to argue the matter and assist this Court. He has opposed the present petition for regular bail and has submitted that investigation is still going on in the present case and there are five other cases against the present petitioner.

Learned counsel for the petitioner, in rebuttal to the abovesaid argument has submitted that the petitioner has already been granted bail in all the said cases. He has relied upon the judgment of Hon'ble Supreme

Court in “***Maulana Mohd. Amir Rashadi vs. State of U.P. and another***”, reported as ***2012 (2) SCC 382*** to contend that the facts and circumstances of the present case are to be seen and the bail application of the petitioner cannot be rejected solely on the ground that the petitioner is involved in other cases. The relevant portion of the said judgment is reproduced hereinbelow:-

“As observed by the High Court, merely on the basis of criminal antecedents, the claim of the second respondent cannot be rejected. In other words, it is the duty of the Court to find out the role of the accused in the case in which he has been charged and other circumstances such as possibility of fleeing away from the jurisdiction of the Court etc.”

Learned counsel for the petitioner has further argued that it is highly unlikely that main accused-Kuldeep Ram could implicate his own wife by suffering a disclosure statement against the petitioner.

This Court has heard the learned counsel for the parties and has perused the record.

The petitioner is stated to be a 34 year old lady. No recovery has been effected from the present petitioner and the recovery has been effected from the husband of the petitioner Kuldeep Ram. The petitioner has not been named in the FIR and is sought to be implicated solely on the basis of disclosure statement of Kuldeep Ram.

A Coordinate Bench of this Court in ***Mewa Singh's*** case (Supra) has passed the following order:-

“1. The petitioner has approached this Court seeking grant of anticipatory bail in a case registered

against him vide FIR No.133 dated 24.11.2019 under Section 21 NDPS Act Police Station Lohian, District Jalandhar.

2. *Reply way of affidavit of Mr. Piara Singh, PPS, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Sub-Division Shahkot, District Jalandhar (Rural) on behalf of the respondent-State has been filed, which is taken on record.*

3. *The allegations in nut-shell are that Bachittar Singh was found in possession of 1.7 Kgs. 'Heroin'. During the course of interrogation, he made a disclosure statement nominating the petitioner as an accused wherein he stated that the contraband in question had been supplied by the petitioner.*

4. *Learned counsel for the petitioner has submitted that he has falsely been implicated in the present case and was never arrested at the spot and that the alleged disclosure statement is not worth credence.*

5. *Opposing the petition, learned State counsel has submitted that keeping in view the antecedents of the petitioner his complicity is clearly evident inasmuch as he stands involved in three other cases i.e. FIR No.43 dated 2.4.2016 under Sections 15, 21, 22 NDPS Act, Police Station Sultanpur Lodhi; FIR No.5 dated 5.1.2020 under Sections 307, 186, 332, 353, 224, 225, 427, 148, 149 IPC, Police Station Sultanpur Lodhi & FIR No.193 dated 193 dated 22.11.2019 under Sections 15, 21, 25, 29 NDPS Act, Police Station Kartarpur.*

6. *I have considered rival submissions addressed before this Court.*

7. *It is not disputed that the petitioner was never*

apprehended at the spot and that the only evidence against him is in the shape of disclosure statement, the admissibility and veracity of which would be tested during the course of trial. As regards the other three cases which are stated to be pending against the petitioner, the learned counsel for the petitioner has submitted that even in the said cases he has been falsely implicated and was never arrested at the spot and has been granted anticipatory bail in all three cases.

8. *Having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case and that it is a case where the petitioner has been nominated solely on the basis of disclosure statement, the petition is accepted and it is ordered that the petitioner in the event of his arrest shall be released on bail subject to his furnishing personal bonds and surety bonds to the satisfaction of Arresting/Investigating Officer. However, the petitioner shall join the investigation as and when called upon to do so and cooperate with the Arresting/Investigating Officer and shall also abide by the conditions as provided under Section 438 (2) Cr.P.C.*

9. *It is however clarified that in case the petitioner does not join investigation, it shall be open to the investigating agency/prosecution to move for cancellation of his bail.”*

Another Coordinate Bench of this Court in ***Daljit Singh's*** case

(Supra) has passed the following order:-

“Petitioner seeks grant of anticipatory bail under Section 438 Cr.P.C. in case bearing FIR No.188 dated 08.04.2020 registered under Sections 15, 18, 27A, 29 of

NDPS Act, under Sections 140, 188, 216, 419, 420, 467, 468, 471, 474 IPC and under Section 6 of Official Secret Act at Police Station Pehowa, District Kurukshetra.

Petitioner has been implicated on the basis of disclosure statement of co-accused from whom 248 kgs of poppy husk, 1 Kg 500 grams of opium and 199 Kgs khas khas were recovered.

FIR was registered on the basis of secret information, but still name of petitioner did not figure in the ruqa of the police.

Notice of motion was issued on 27.05.2020 alongwith interim directions in favour of the petitioner to join the investigation.

Order dated 27.05.2020 is reproduced here as under:-

“On account of outbreak of covid-19 the instant matter is being taken up through video conferencing.

Instant petition has been filed under Section 438 Cr.PC for grant of anticipatory bail to the petitioner in FIR No.188 dated 8.4.2020 for the offences under Section 15,18,27-A,29 of NDPS Act, 1985 at Police Station Pehowa, District Kurukshetra.

Learned counsel for the petitioner has inter alia contended that the petitioner is innocent and has been falsely implicated in the case only on the basis of disclosure statement of co-accused from whom recovery of 248 kgs of poppy husk, 1 kg 500 grams of opium and 199 kgs.of khas khas was recovered. It has been further contended that the factum of his false implication is further fortified from the fact that the recovery of the

aforementioned narcotic contraband was effected on the basis of secret information and his name did not figure either in the ruka sent by the police nor in the FIR in question coupled with the fact that nothing was recovered from him. He is not even involved in any other case of similar nature.

Notice of motion for 10.7.2020.

On the asking of the Court, Mr. Saurabh Mohunta, DAG., Haryana accepts notice.

Meanwhile, petitioner is directed to join the investigation and appear before the investigating agency/Investigating Officer. On his appearance, he shall be released on interim bail to the satisfaction of arresting/investigating officer. The petitioner shall, join the investigation as and when call for and shall abide by the conditions specified under Section 438(2) Cr.P.C.

27.05.2020 (MANJARI NEHRU KAUL)
archana JUDGE

Thereafter, the case was adjourned for filing detailed reply on behalf of the State.

The stands of the State is that the petitioner was escorting the canter in which the contraband was present and he was assigned the duty of giving signal in case of presence of police on the way.

Learned State counsel relies upon call details, tower location of the petitioner and the co-accused and also relies upon bank statement showing deposit of amount in the account of co-accused. The material on which the learned State counsel relies upon is dependent upon the evidence to be led in that context at the relevant stage.

Petitioner has joined the investigation, but learned

State counsel seeks custody of the petitioner on the aforesaid premise.

*Having heard learned counsel for the parties, I find that the petitioner having involved on the basis of disclosure statement of co-accused namely Balbir and Rajinder is hit by the ratio of **Tofan Singh vs State of Tamil Nadu, Criminal Appeal No.152 of 2013** wherein it has been observed that the officers who are invested with powers under Section 53 of NDPS Act are the police officers within the meaning of Section 25 of the Evidence Act. Any confessional statement made before the police officer would be hit by Section 25 of the Evidence Act. Statement under Section 67 of NDPS Act cannot be used as a confessional statement in the trial of an offence under NDPS Act.*

In view of aforesaid position, it would be just and appropriate to confirm order dated 27.05.2020, without meaning anything on the merits of the case.

Ordered accordingly.

However, the petitioner shall keep on joining the investigation as and when required to do so by the Investigating Officer and shall abide by the conditions as envisaged under Section 438(2) Cr.P.C.

Petition stands disposed of.”

The argument of learned counsel for the petitioner to the effect that the petitioner has been implicated solely on account of recovery being effected from her husband, cannot be outrightly rejected. Moreover, co-accused of the petitioner Vidya Devi, who is the mother-in-law of the petitioner, has already been granted benefit of anticipatory bail vide order dated 14.02.2022 passed in CRM-M-6165-2022 titled as **“Vidya Devi vs. State of Punjab.”**

Keeping in view the abovesaid facts and circumstances as well as the law laid down in **Tofan Singh's case** (Supra), **Mewa Singh's case** (Supra), **Daljit Singh's case** (Supra) and **Maulana Mohd. Amir Rashadi's case** (Supra), the present petition is allowed and the petitioner is ordered to be released on bail on her furnishing bail / surety bonds to the satisfaction of the concerned trial Court/ Duty Magistrate and subject to her not being required in any other case.

Nothing stated above shall be construed as a final expression of opinion on the merits of the case and the trial would proceed independently of the observations made in the present case which are only for the purpose of adjudicating the present bail petition.

(VIKAS BAHL)
JUDGE

March 16, 2022.

Davinder Kumar

Whether speaking/reasoned:-	Yes/No
Whether reportable:-	Yes/No