

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH

(210)

CRM-M-33557-2022

Date of decision: - 05.08.2022

Gurmukh Singh @ Sonu

....Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

.....Respondent

CORAM : HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VIKAS BAHL

Present:- Mr. Parminder Singh Sekhon, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. Sukhbeer Singh, AAG, Punjab.

VIKAS BAHL, J. (ORAL)

This is a first petition under Section 439 Cr.P.C. for grant of regular bail in FIR No.104 dated 31.07.2019, registered under Sections 15 and 29 of the Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, at Police Station Kot Ise Khan, District Moga.

Learned counsel for the petitioner has submitted that in the present case, the FIR has been registered on 31.07.2019 on the basis of secret information received against an unknown person and in pursuance of the said secret information, the truck in question had been apprehended, although no one was found to be present inside the said truck. It is further submitted that the petitioner is not named in the FIR and his name did not even figure in the secret information and the petitioner is neither the owner of the truck, nor was apprehended at the

spot and further no recovery has been effected from him. It is further submitted that on 31.08.2019, after a period of one month of the registration of the FIR, as per the case of the prosecution, another secret informer had informed the police that the petitioner, along with eight other persons is involved in the present case. It is further submitted that one of the persons who was also implicated vide the said secret information was Virsa Singh and on the basis of the said secret information, the Virsa Singh was arrested on 04.09.2019. The said Virsa Singh is stated to have also named eight other persons, including the present petitioner, as being involved in the present case. It is also submitted that there are no call details between the petitioner and the said Virsa Singh so as to connect the petitioner with the alleged crime and the other co-accused of the petitioner i.e. Sukhchain Singh @ Chaina; Amarjit Singh @ Amba & Thela; Avtar Singh; Puran Singh and Surinder Singh have already been granted the benefit of anticipatory bail by Co-ordinate Bench of this Court, which has been annexed as Annexures P-2 to P-6 along with the present petition. The petitioner has been in custody since 19.12.2021 and the challan has been presented and there are 09 prosecution witnesses, none of whom have been examined and thus, the trial is likely to take time. Learned counsel for the petitioner has relied upon the upon the judgment passed in ***CRM-M-12051-2020***, by a Co-ordinate Bench of this Court dated 17.06.2020 titled as “***Mewa Singh Vs. State of Punjab***” and the judgment passed in ***CRM-M-12997-2020 titled as “Daljit Singh Vs. State of Haryana”***, to contend that merely on the basis of the disclosure statement, the petitioner cannot be denied the

benefit of regular bail.

Learned State counsel, on the other hand, has opposed the present petition for regular bail and has submitted that in the present case, the recovery effected from the truck in the present case is of a very huge quantity of 6,400 kilograms of poppy husk and the petitioner has been named by co-accused Virsa Singh, who had stated that the present petitioner was the driver of the truck in question and part of the alleged crime. The other factual aspects however, have not been disputed by learned State counsel. It is also submitted that the owner of the truck is not the petitioner, but one Surjit Singh.

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

The Co-ordinate Bench of this Court in ***Mewa Singh' case*** (supra) has held as under: -

“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.”*

The relevant portion of ***Daljit Singh's*** (*supra*) judgment is reproduced hereinbelow:-

“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)

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 coaccused. 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.”

In the present case, a perusal of the FIR would show that the same has been registered on the basis of the secret information and the petitioner had not been named in the same, nor been named in the FIR, nor any recovery had been effected from him. The alleged recovery had been from a truck bearing registration No.RJ-14-GC-7154, which as per the prosecution case, is owned by Surjit Singh. The name of the petitioner, Virsa Singh and other accused had come about in the subsequent secret information recorded on 31.08.2019 i.e. a month after the registration of the FIR and the said Virsa Singh had been arrested on 04.09.2019, who had also nominated the present petitioner, vide his disclosure statement. There are no call details to implicate the petitioner, *much less*, between the petitioner and Virsa Singh. Even after the arrest of the petitioner, no recovery has been made from him. The petitioner has been in custody since 19.12.2021 and the investigation is complete and there are 9 prosecution witnesses, none of whom have been examined, thus, the trial is likely to take time. Moreover, co-accused of the petitioner i.e. Sukhchain Singh @ Chaina; Amarjit Singh @ Amba & Thela; Avtar Singh; Puran Singh and Surinder Singh have been granted the benefit of anticipatory bail by a Co-ordinate Bench of this Court, which have been annexed as Annexures P-2 to P-6 along with the present petition

Keeping in view the above-said facts and circumstances as well as the above-cited judgments, the present petition is allowed and the petitioner is ordered to be released on bail on his 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. The petitioner shall also abide by the following conditions:-

1. The petitioner will not tamper with the evidence during the trial.
2. The petitioner will not pressurize / intimidate the prosecution witness(s).
3. The petitioner will appear before the trial Court on the date fixed, unless personal presence is exempted.
4. The petitioner shall not commit an offence similar to the offence of which he is accused of, or for commission of which he is suspected.
5. The petitioner shall not directly or indirectly make any inducement, threat or promise to any person acquainted with the facts of the case so as to dissuade him from disclosing such facts to the Court or to any police officer or tamper with the evidence.

In case of breach of any of the above conditions, the prosecution shall be at liberty to move an application for cancellation of bail before this Court.

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

August 05, 2022
naresh.k

(VIKAS BAHL)
JUDGE

Whether reasoned/speaking?
Whether reportable?

Yes
No