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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-25907-2023
DECIDED ON: 22.05.2023

NEELAM RANI

.....PETITIONER

VERSUS

STATE OF PUNJAB

.....RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL

Present: Mr. Jagtar Singh Sidhu, Advocate
for the petitioner.

SANDEEP MOUDGIL, J (ORAL)

The instant petition under Section 438 Cr.P.C., has been filed for grant of anticipatory bail to the petitioner in FIR No.104, dated 01.06.2021, under Sections 406 and 420 of the IPC, 1860, registered at Police Station Fatehgarh Sahib, District Fatehgarh Sahib (Annexure P-1).

Learned counsel for the petitioner, on a query put by the Court to show changed circumstances and fact for maintainability of 2nd anticipatory bail petition, submits that the challan has not yet been filed in the instant FIR dated 01.06.2021 and even after the withdrawal of the earlier petition bearing No.CRM-M-45344-2021 dated 29.08.2022 (Annexure P-6) seeking anticipatory bail, nothing has been done by the Investigating Agency so far.

Learned counsel for the petitioner vehemently contends that it was his associate, who appeared at the time when the earlier petition was withdrawn i.e., on 29.08.2022.

A perusal of the aforesaid order dated 29.08.2022 (Annexure P-6) clearly indicates that the first petition was withdrawn “after arguing for some time” from where it can be easily inferred that once the Court was not convinced on merits to grant interim protection to the petitioner, the opportunity to withdraw the same was availed and under the garb of withdrawal of the petition, the instant petition has been filed on the same cause of action alleging that challan has not been filed so far apart from that there is no change of circumstance to bring the instant petition within the parameters of maintainability of second anticipatory bail petition.

The first and sole argument raised by the counsel for the petitioner is that the investigating agency has not at all moved and filed the challan in the instant case, since the registration of FIR, it would not only amount to an attempt to mis-represent before the Court, but would also clearly depict that the petitioner is trying to befool the Court, as it is absolutely clear that once the petitioner does not surrender, after dismissal of the anticipatory bail petition earlier on 29.08.2022, which order attained the finality, the investigating agency cannot proceed and also as has been informed by the learned State counsel that the State has moved the trial Court seeking arrest of the petitioner, wherein non-bailable warrants have been issued for 09.08.2023 and prior to that, it was for 20.05.2023, but the petitioner is playing smart and clever, who is not ready and willing to associate in the investigation process by surrendering himself after availing all the remedies for anticipatory bail, has now again made a valiant attempt by filing second anticipatory bail petition, which is not at all maintainable, as has been observed by this Court in the case of *Gaurav Matta vs. State of Haryana passed in CRM-M-9494-*

2023, while relying upon the judgment of five Judges of Supreme Court tested the judicial discretion envisaged under Section 438 Cr.P.C., alongwith other factors connected with the said provision in case ***Gurubaksh Singh Sibbia vs. State of Punjab, ((1980)2 SCC 565)*** and prompted certain principles which may be summarised as under:

“ (i) *The use of the expression 'reason to believe' in Section 438(1) shows that the belief that the applicant may be so arrested must be founded on reasonable grounds. Mere 'fear' is not 'belief'. A belief can be said to be founded on reasonable grounds only if there is something tangible to go by on the basis of which it can be said that the applicant's apprehension that he may be arrested is genuine. Such belief must be capable of being examined by the court objectively, because it is then alone that the court can determine whether the applicant has reason to believe that he may be arrested. Specific events and facts must be disclosed by the applicant in order to enable the court to judge of the reasonableness of his belief. (Paras 35, 40 and 41).*

A blanket order i.e. an order which serves as a blanket to cover or protect any and every kind of allegedly unlawful activity, in fact any eventuality, likely or unlikely regarding which, no concrete information can possibly be had should not generally be passed. Such a blanket order-is bound to cause serious interference with the functions of the police. (Paras 40 and 41)

(ii) If an application for anticipatory bail is made to the High Court or the Court of Session it must apply its

own mind to the question and decide whether a case has been made out for granting such relief. It cannot leave the question for the decision of the Magistrate concerned under Section 437 of the Code, as and when an occasion arises. (Para 36).

(iii) The filing of an FIR is not a condition precedent to the exercise of the power under Section 438. (Para 37)

(iv) Anticipatory bail can be granted even after an FIR is filed, so long as the applicant has not been arrested. (Para 38).

(v) The provisions of Section 438 cannot be invoked after the arrest of the accused. (Para 39)

(vi) An order of bail can be passed under Section 438(1) without notice to the Public Prosecutor or the Government advocate forthwith and the question of bail should be re-examined in the light of the respective contentions of the parties. The ad interim order too must conform to the requirements of the section and suitable conditions should be imposed on the applicant even at that stage (Para 42)

(vii) Regarding time-limit, if any, for anticipatory bail the court may, if there are reasons for doing so, limit the operation of the order to a short period until after the filing of an FIR in respect of the matter covered by the order. The applicant may in such cases be directed to obtain an order of bail under Section 437 or 439 of the Code within a reasonably short period after the filing of the FIR as aforesaid. But this need not be followed as an invariable rule. The normal rule should be not to limit the operation of the order in relation to a period of time. (Para 42)"

In the light of aforesaid judicial pronouncements and the provisions of Section 438 Cr.P.C., 1973, it is crystal clear that the Court must be satisfied that a fit case had been made out for exercise of such discretion. This Court has to make an effort to strike a balance between the individuals right to personal freedom and the investigational rights of the police. This provision is not to be applied mechanically especially in the light of phraseology "if it thinks fit" as envisaged therein with Sub Section(2) is indicative enough that such order on the face of it must show the reasons for granting anticipatory bail.

The insertion of word "or" in sub-Section 1 of Section 438 has invested this Court with concurrent jurisdiction. Evidently the discretionary power to the Court does not flow from Article 21 of the Constitution of India for grant of anticipatory bail but conferred by the Statute enacted by the Parliament, wherein a distinction from the language of Sections 438 and 439 Cr.P.C., is quite evident that the provisions contained in Section 439 flow from Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The constitutional Bench of the Apex Court has interpreted Section 438(1) of Cr.P.C., in the case of Gurubaksh's Singh (supra), which indicated:-

"Section 438(1) of the Code lays down a condition which has to be satisfied before anticipatory bail can be granted. The application must show that he has 'reason to believe' that he may be arrested for a non-bailable offence. The use of the expression 'reason to believe' shows that the belief that the applicant may be arrested must be founded on reasonable grounds. Mere 'fear' is not belief for

which reason it is not enough for the applicant to show that he has some sort of a vague apprehension that some one is going to make an accusation against him, in pursuance of which he may be arrested. The grounds on which the belief of the applicant is based that he may be arrested for a non-bailable offence, must be capable of being examined by the court objectively, because it is then alone that the court can determine whether the applicant has reason to believe that he may be arrested. Section 438(1), therefore, cannot be invoked on the basis of vague and general allegations, as if to arm oneself in perpetuity against a possible arrest. Otherwise, the number of applicants for anticipatory bail will be, as large as, at any rate, the adult populace. Anticipatory bail is a device “to secure the individual's liberty”. it is neither a passport to the commission of crime nor a shield against any and all kinds of accusations, likely or unlikely.”

Apart from that, the question “can a formula be devised conferring the power of granting anticipatory bail in straight jacket?” was answered in the negative observing that while laying down cast iron rules in a matter like granting anticipatory bail, it is apt to be overlooked that even Judges can have but an imperfect awareness of the needs of new situation. Judges have to decide cases as they come before them, mindful of the need to keep passions and prejudices out of their decisions and it will be strange, if, by employing judicial artifices and techniques, discretion conferred upon the Courts is cut down by devising a straight jacket formula. Going further, I noticed that the Hon’ble Constitution Bench narrated the situation and contingencies for invoking power under Section 438 indicating in para 8 of the

judgment of ***Gurubaksh Singh Sibbia vs. State of Punjab*** (*supra*), which reads as under:

"No one can accuse the police of possessing a healing touch nor indeed does anyone have misgiving in regard to constraints consequent upon confinement in police custody. But, society has come to accept and acquiesce in all that follows upon a police arrest with a certain amount of sangfroid, in so far as the ordinary rule of criminal investigation is concerned. It is the normal day-to-day business of the police to investigate into charges brought before them and broadly and generally, they have nothing to gain, not favours at any rate, by subjecting ordinary criminals to needless harassment. But the crimes, the criminals and even the complainants can occasionally possess extraordinary features. When the even flow of the life becomes turbid, the police can be called upon to inquire into charges arising out of political antagonism. The powerful processes of criminal law can then be perverted for achieving extraneous ends. Attendant upon such investigations, when the police are not free agents within their sphere of duty, is a great amount of inconvenience, harassment and humiliation. That can even take the form of the parading of a respectable person in hand cuffs, apparently on way to a court of justice. The foul deed is done when an adversary is exposed to social ridicule and obloquy, no matter when and whether a conviction is secured or is at all possible. It is in order to meet such situations, though not limited to these contingencies, that the power to grant anticipatory bail was introduced into the Code of 1973".

Having discussed the factual and legal chronology, this Court convincingly able to observe that while exercising powers under Section 438 Cr.P.C., the Court is duty bound to strike a balance between the individuals right to personal freedom and the investigational right of the police, therefore, the provisions of anticipatory bail cannot be allowed to put to abuse at the instance of unscrupulous petitioner.

Accordingly, the second or subsequent bail application under Section 438 Cr.P.C., can be filed, if there is a change in the fact-situation or in law, which requires the earlier view being interfered with or where the earlier finding has become obsolete. An accused, who has been denied the bail earlier can move a subsequent application only on in that limited area. If the issue, which had been canvassed earlier, would not be permitted to be re-agitated on the same grounds, as it would lead to a speculation and uncertainty in the administration of justice and may lead to forum hunting.

Since the petition is mischievous and clever device not to derail the process of investigation, but a serious attempt has been made before this Court, wherein the fact with regard to issuance of non-bailable warrants have not been disclosed, the petition deserves to be dismissed with cost of Rs.25,000/-, which shall be deposited in the Punjab & High Court Bar Clerks' Association Fund, Chandigarh.

Ordered accordingly.

(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)
JUDGE

22.05.2023

Meenu

<i>Whether speaking/reasoned</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>Whether reportable</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>