

**110 IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH****CRWP NO. 7674 OF 2023 (O&M)
DATE OF DECISION : 04.08.2023****Rishita and another****...Petitioners****Versus****State of Haryana and others****...Respondents****CORAM : HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ARUN MONGA**

Present : Petitioners in person.
Mr. Manjot Singh Gujral, Advocate,
for the petitioners.

Ms. Svaneel Jaswal, Additional A.G., Haryana.

ARUN MONGA, J. (ORAL)

Conflict herein is the enforcement of fundamental rights of the petitioners to seek protection of their "life and liberty" as enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India vis-à-vis a conceded violation of Section 5 (iii) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, inasmuch as a boy aged 20 years 09 months and girl 18 years have got married with each other, claiming to be in love.

2. Notice of motion to the official respondents, at this stage only, is being issued. Learned State counsel on service of advance copy of the petition appears and accepts notice on behalf of the respondent-State of Haryana.

3. Given the nature of the order being passed, there is no necessity to seek any return by the official respondents or even to serve the private respondents No.4 to 6.

4. Facts, as pleaded in the petition, succinctly are that family members of petitioner No.1 were against her wish to marry petitioner No.2.

However, petitioners got married on 21.07.2023 according to Hindu Rites. Photographs of their marriage have been appended with the petition. Petitioners state that after their marriage, private respondents have issued threat to eliminate them in order to save their family prestige.

5. In the circumstances, the petitioners approached respondent No.2 i.e The Commissioner of Police, Panchkula and submitted a representation dated 22.07.2023 (Annexure P-5) to safeguard their life and liberty, but no action is being taken on the same. Hence the present criminal writ petition.

6. I have heard learned counsel for the petitioners, as also learned State counsel. Without going into the merits of legitimacy of the relationship of the petitioners, I am of the view that the petitioners are entitled to seek protection of their life and liberty, even if it were a case of no marriage but merely a consensual relationship.

7. Both the petitioners are allegedly a run-away couple, despite one of them not being of marriageable age, claim to have married each other forced by the circumstances, triggered by the parents of the girl, who wanted her to forcibly marry another boy of their choice, against her wishes.

8. I am conscious of the fact that the boy is not of marriageable age. Marriage, assuming that it took place according to Hindu Rites is, therefore, in violation of Section 5 (iii) of the Hindu Marriage Act. Section 5, *ibid* envisages statutory pre-requisites for the consenting parties to solemnize marriage between them. Sub Section (iii) thereof stipulates the minimum ages of a bridegroom and a bride. However, at the same time, Section 11 of the Hindu Marriage Act which declares certain marriages, which are in contravention of Section 5 (supra), to be void, but precludes a

marriage solemnized in contravention of Sub Section (iii) of Section 5, *ibid* from the purview of being regarded as void or invalid.

9. I find support to my above sentiments from a Division Bench judgment rendered by Delhi High Court in case titled as *Jitender Kumar Sharma Vs. State and Another*¹.

10. Reverting to the present case, it appears that the petitioners have not solemnized a valid marriage as per Sub Section (iii) of Section 5 of the Hindu Marriage Act and may be required to satisfy the validity of their marriage before an appropriate Forum in the event of same being put to challenge.

11. The issue in hand, however, is not marriage of the petitioners, but seeking protection of their life and liberty. They cannot be deprived of their Fundamental Right under Article 21 of Constitution of India, which stands on a much higher pedestal. Being sacrosanct under the Constitutional Scheme it must be protected, regardless of the solemnization of an invalid or void marriage or even the absence of any marriage between the parties.

12. It is the bounden duty of the State as per the Constitutional obligations casted upon it to protect the life and liberty of every citizen. Right to human life is to be treated on much higher pedestal, regardless of a citizen being minor or a major. Mere fact that the petitioners are not of marriageable age in the present case would not deprive them of their fundamental right as envisaged in Constitution of India, being citizens of India.

13. In the premise, without commenting on the legitimacy of the relationship between the petitioners, the criminal writ petition is disposed of

with a direction to respondents No.2 and 3 i.e., Commissioner of Police, Panchkula and Station House Officer, Sector 20, Panchkula, Haryana, to verify the contents of the petition, particularly the threat perception of the petitioners and complaints/representation (Annexure P-5) and if deemed fit, to take appropriate steps to provide necessary protection *qua* their life and liberty in accordance with law.

14. It is clarified that this order shall neither be treated as a stamp of this Court *qua* marriage of the petitioners nor any reflection on the merits of the contentions raised by them in the present petition.

15. The criminal writ petition is, accordingly, disposed of.

04.08.2023
vandana

(ARUN MONGA)
JUDGE

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