

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

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2023:PHHC:130230

CRWP-9990-2023

Date of decision: October 7th, 2023

Raj Kumar

.....Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab and others

.....Respondents

CORAM: HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE MANJARI NEHRU KAUL

Present: Mr. D.C. Dhaula, Advocate
for the petitioner.

MANJARI NEHRU KAUL, J. (ORAL)

The instant petition has been filed under Articles 226/227 of the Constitution of India for issuance of a writ in the nature of Habeas Corpus directing the respondents to release the detenues, mentioned in para No.4 of the petition, from the illegal detention of private respondents.

This Court in ***LPA No.32 of 2013*** titled as ***“Murti Vs. The State of Punjab and others”***, has held as under:-

“It may be mentioned here that the allegations of the appellant in the writ petition are that the alleged detenues 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. ”

In view of the above, this Criminal Writ Petition is disposed of with a direction to respondent No.2-District Magistrate-cum-Deputy Commissioner, District S.A.S. Nagar, to treat this petition as a complaint under the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 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 along with a copy of the writ petition.

October 7th, 2023
Puneet

(MANJARI NEHRU KAUL)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned : Yes
Whether reportable : No