

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
CRIMINAL APPELLATE JURISDICTION

BAIL APPLICATION NO.2044 OF 2024

Mohan Ramesh Suryavanshi ...Applicant
vs.
The State of Maharashtra ...Respondent

Mr. Ranjeet Patil a/w. Sumitkumar Nimbalkar and Ms. Kalpana Chate, for the Applicant.

Mr. P.P. Jadhav, APP, for the Respondent/State.

Smt. Asha Kadam, API, Trombay police station.

CORAM : N. J. JAMADAR, J.

DATE : JUNE 13, 2024

P.C.:

1. Heard the learned counsel for the applicant and the learned APP for the State.

2. The applicant, who is arraigned in C.R.No. 426 of 2023 registered with Trombay Police Station for the offences punishable under Section 370 read with Section 34 of the IPC and Sections 81 and 87 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and Sections 33 and 36 of the Maharashtra Medical Practitioners' Act, 1961, has preferred this application to enlarge him on bail.

3. On 6th September 2023, an information was received at Trombay Police Station that a lady was to sell a new born child. A trap was led. The said lady was contacted on her cell phone. She agreed to come near Khandoba Temple, Maharashtra Nagar,

Mankhurd, along with a child. A surveillance was mounted. At about 12.50 p.m., Reena Nitin Chavan (A2) came at the said spot along with a new born child and Sairabano Shaikh (A1). Reena Chavan (A2) was apprehended along with the child.

4. On interrogation, Reena Chavan (A2) and Sairabano (A1) revealed that the mother of the said child, Gulbashah Matin Shaikh (A3) and co-accused Gorobi U. Shaikh (A4) had conspired with the other co-accused in selling the said child for a sum of Rs.5 lakhs, sans legal adoption. Gulbashah (A3) came to be arrested. In the inquiry with Gulabshah (A3), it transpired with Sairabano (A1) had sold a child of Rukaiya Shaikh with the assistance of Goribi U. Shaikh (A4), and Shabana J. Shaikh (A5). Those accused were also apprehended.

5. The investigation further revealed that the Julia Fernandes (A6), was the mastermind behind the trafficking of children. In the disclosure statement, Goribi U. Shah (A4) disclosed that she along with Dr. Sairav and Shabana (A5) had sold the children of Gulabshah and Rukaiya at the instance of Julia. The photographs of the children which were shared with Julia and Sairabano (A1) for showing the same to the prospective purchasers were retrieved from the mobile phone handset of Goribi (A4) pursuant to the said disclosure statement.

6. The investigation further revealed that Julia was in regular touch with Shabana and Goribi (A4). There were financial transactions between Julia and Goribi (A4). It further transpired that Julia had, in turn, employed Subhash Borse (A7) and the applicant to scout for the prospective purchasers to sell the children, illegally. Subhash (A7) was in regular touch with Julia. Pursuant to the disclosure statement made by Subhash Borse, the photographs of the children which Julia had sent on his Whatsapp, to share the same with the prospective purchasers, were retrieved from the mobile phone of Subhash Borse (A7). The applicant came to be arrested on 9th October, 2023.

7. At the outset, Mr. Patil, the learned counsel for the applicant submits that the role attributed to the applicant is identical to the one that was attributed to Subhash Borse (A7), who came to be released on bail alongwith Julia (A6), the alleged mastermind, by an order dated 2nd May, 2024. It was submitted that this Court has released the co-accused Subhash Borse (A7) and Julia (A6) on bail after recording elaborate reasons. Those reasons govern the case of the applicant as well.

8. Mr. Jadhav, the learned APP, fairly submitted that the role of the applicant appears to be similar to that of Subhash Borse (A7) who has been released on bail. Therefore, the principle of parity

may apply.

9. While releasing the co-accused Subhash Borse (A7) and Julia Fernandes (A6), this Court has observed, inter alia, as under:-

10] I have given careful consideration to the submissions canvassed across the bar. Reena and Sairabano were apprehended along with a new born child of Gulabshah. The prosecution alleges that during the course of investigation, it transpired that the accused had attempted to sell a child born to Rukaiya as well. The said child was also retrieved from the custody of a lady near Sahara Hotel, as is stated by Mohd. Yunus Shah, brother of Rukaiya. The role attributed to the applicant - Julia is that of providing money to the expecting mothers and, thereafter, getting new born children and selling them to the prospective purchasers.

11] However, the material on record indicates that the applicant Julia, or for that matter, Subhash Borse, are sought to be roped in on the basis of the disclosure statements of the co-accused. It is trite, a disclosure statement made by one accused is not a legal evidence against the non-maker co-accused. Therefore, the nature and quality of the other evidence assumes significance. The prosecution banks upon the statements of Noorjahan and Amin, sister and son of Goribi. The tenor of their statements is that Goribi was arranging fertility donors and the applicant Julia used to pay her. The statement of Mohd. Yunus Shah refers to the involvement of Goribi Shaikh in the alleged child trafficking. Thus, the statements prima facie do not implicate the applicant - Julia.

12] The prosecution then relies upon the electronic evidence in the form of the photos retrieved from the mobile phone handset of the accused and the Whatsapp chats. Those photos and chats were retrieved pursuant to the disclosure statements made by the co-accused. The veracity and reliability of the said material is a matter for evidence and trial. Indeed, there appear to be financial transactions between the applicant Julia and Amin, son of Goribi. However, the statements of Noorjaha and Amin Shaikh refer to some arrangement between the

applicant Julia and Goribi. The CDR does indicate that Julia was in touch with Subhash Borse, Shabana and Goribi. The CDR in itself without the transcript of the conversation may not be sturdy material to deprive the personal liberty of the applicants.

13] It is true, Applicant Julia has antecedents. That puts the court on guard. But the quality of evidence which emerges in the instant case against the applicant Julia deserves to be taken into account. The complicity of Subhash Borse, as noted above, rests on the disclosure made by Julia and the discovery made by Subhash leading to the retrieval of the photos of children and the CDR. The pivotal question which may warrant adjudication at the trial is, whether there is nexus between the applicants – Julia and Subhash Borse with the trafficking of the children in question.

10. As the applicant appears to be similarly circumstanced like Subhash Borse (A7). The claim for parity appears sustainable.

11. There are two antecedents of the applicant. However, having regard to the fact that the investigation is complete for all intent and purpose and the trial is unlikely to be concluded, in reasonable period, I am inclined to allow the application.

Hence, the following order.

ORDER

(i) The Applications stand allowed.

(ii) The Applicant Mohan Ramesh Suryavanshi be released on bail in C.R.No.426 of 2013 registered with Trombey Police Station on furnishing a PR bond in the sum of Rs.50,000/- each and one or two sureties in the like amount to the satisfaction of the trial Court.

(iii) The applicant shall mark his presence at Trombey Police Station on first Monday of every month between 11 am to 1 pm for a period of three years or till the conclusion of the trial, whichever is earlier.

(iv) The applicant shall not tamper with the prosecution evidence. The applicant 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 the facts to Court or any police officer.

(v) On being released on bail, the applicant shall furnish his contact numbers and residential addresses to the investigating officer and shall keep him updated, in case there is any change.

(vi) The applicant shall regularly attend the proceedings before the jurisdictional Court.

(viii) By way of abundant caution, it is clarified that the observations made hereinabove are confined for the purpose of determination of the entitlement for bail and they may not be construed as an expression of opinion on the guilt or otherwise of the applicant and the trial Court shall not be influenced by any of the observations made hereinabove.

Applications disposed.

(N. J. JAMADAR, J.)