

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

2024:PHHC:110884



216

CRM-M-6022-2024

Date of Decision: 28.08.2024

Manpreet Singh @ Mannu

...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM:- HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL.

Present: Mr. Tarun Sharma, Advocate for the petitioner.

Mr. J.S. Rattu, DAG, Punjab.

.....

SANDEEP MOUDGIL.J (Oral)

1. **Relief sought**

The jurisdiction of this Court has been invoked under Section 439 Cr.P.C. for grant of regular bail to the petitioner in case FIR No.0062, dated 18.10.2023, under Sections 21, 22 of NDPS Act (Section 29 of NDPS Act added later on), registered at Police Station Fatehgarh Panjtoor, District Moga.

2. Prosecution story setup in the present case as per the version in the FIR as under:-

“SHO Sahib, Police Station Fatehgarh Panjtoor, Jai Hind, today myself ASI alongwith ASI Dilbagh Singh, 761/Moga, CT Rajwinder Singh 645/ Moga were on private car. I was driving the car myself. We were patrolling in search of suspicious person in the area of our police station. While patrolling when police party reached near Dana Mandi Fatehgarh Panjtoor, then secret informer came to me and took me separately and gave me a secret information that Manpreet

Singh son of Satnam Singh resident of Peer Mohammad, P.S. Makhu, Distt. Ferozepur and is habitual of selling heroin and intoxicant tablets and now also he is in possession of heavy quantity of heroin and intoxicant tablets and he is waiting for the customers for selling the same. He is coming from the side of Dharamkot of his motorcycle hero Splender Colour black. He is bearing black stripes shirt and black pant. If police picket is held at Dharamkot Chowk Bus Stand Fatehgarh Panjtoor then he can be apprehended alongwith heavy quantity of heroin and intoxicant tablets. The secret information is found credible and after writing ruqa for registration of FIR, same is sent to police station for registration of FIR against Manpreet Singh son of Satnam Singh resident of Peer Mohammad, P.S. Makhu, Distt. Ferozepur as the above Manpreet Singh has committed an offence keeping heroin and intoxicant tablets in his possession which is an offence u/s 21,22-61-85 NDPS Act. As myself ASI is of local rank. Therefore I am not competent to investigate the offences under NDPS Act investigation, myself ASI has further requested to depute some regular investigation officer at the spot, disclosed by the secret informer. I have made this request through mobile phone and after writing ruqa for registration of FIR against Manpreet Singh son of Satnam Singh resident of Peer Mohammad, P.S. Makhu, Distt. Ferozepur, same is sent through CT Rajwinder Singh 645 Moga to Police station. After registering the FIR, FIR number be intimated. PCR Mgoa be informed. Special report be issued. Myself ASI alongwith other officials is holding police picket at Dharamkot Chowk Bus Stand Fatehgarh Panjtoor as per the information given by secret informer. Sd/- Jatinder Kumar ASI P.S. Fatehgarh Panjtoor.”

3. **Contentions on behalf of the petitioner**

Learned counsel for the petitioner contends that the alleged recovery of 23 loose intoxicant tablets and 60 grams of heroine has been

shown against the petitioner that too from a polythene bag, which is stated to have been thrown away by the petitioner on seeing the police party. He would contend that a concocted story has been made which is highly improbable to be believed. He would further submit that in fact petitioner was picked up from his house and not from the alleged place as stated in the FIR i.e. Bus Stand, Fatehgarh Panjtoor. It is submitted that petitioner is a 20 years old young boy, who is at the threshold of his life.

4. On behalf of the State

On the other hand, learned State counsel has produced the custody certificate of the petitioner today in Court, which is taken on record. He seeks dismissal of the instant petition on the ground that the petitioner is a habitual offender as he is involved in one more case i.e. FIR No.144 dated 28.08.2022 registered under sections 21, 29, 61, 85 of NDPS Act at Police Station Makhu but could not deny the fact that petitioner is on bail in that case.

5. Analysis

Be that as it may, considering the custody period i.e. 10 months 07 days for which the petitioner has suffered incarceration; added with the fact that the charges in the present case were framed on 20.05.2024 and out of the total 18 prosecution witnesses cited, only one witness has been examined so far, which is suffice for this Court to infer that the conclusion of trial will take a long time for which the petitioner cannot be detained behind the bars for an indefinite period.

Reliance can be placed upon the judgment of the Apex Court rendered in “*Dataram versus State of Uttar Pradesh and another*”, 2018(2)

R.C.R. (Criminal) 131, wherein it has been held that the grant of bail is a

general rule and putting persons in jail or in prison or in correction home is an exception. Relevant paras of the said judgment is reproduced as under:-

“2. A fundamental postulate of criminal jurisprudence is the presumption of innocence, meaning thereby that a person is believed to be innocent until found guilty. However, there are instances in our criminal law where a reverse onus has been placed on an accused with regard to some specific offences but that is another matter and does not detract from the fundamental postulate in respect of other offences. Yet another important facet of our criminal jurisprudence is that the grant of bail is the general rule and putting a person in jail or in a prison or in a correction home (whichever expression one may wish to use) is an exception. Unfortunately, some of these basic principles appear to have been lost sight of with the result that more and more persons are being incarcerated and for longer periods. This does not do any good to our criminal jurisprudence or to our society.

3. There is no doubt that the grant or denial of bail is entirely the discretion of the judge considering a case but even so, the exercise of judicial discretion has been circumscribed by a large number of decisions rendered by this Court and by every High Court in the country. Yet, occasionally there is a necessity to introspect whether denying bail to an accused person is the right thing to do on the facts and in the circumstances of a case.

4. While so introspecting, among the factors that need to be considered is whether the accused was arrested during investigations when that person perhaps has the best opportunity to tamper with the evidence or influence witnesses. If the investigating officer does not find it necessary to arrest an accused person during investigations, a strong case should be made out for placing that person in judicial custody after a charge sheet is filed. Similarly, it is important to ascertain whether the accused was participating in the investigations to the satisfaction of the investigating officer and was not

absconding or not appearing when required by the investigating officer. Surely, if an accused is not hiding from the investigating officer or is hiding due to some genuine and expressed fear of being victimised, it would be a factor that a judge would need to consider in an appropriate case. It is also necessary for the judge to consider whether the accused is a first-time offender or has been accused of other offences and if so, the nature of such offences and his or her general conduct. The poverty or the deemed indigent status of an accused is also an extremely important factor and even Parliament has taken notice of it by incorporating an Explanation to section 436 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. An equally soft approach to incarceration has been taken by Parliament by inserting section 436A in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

*5. To put it shortly, a humane attitude is required to be adopted by a judge, while dealing with an application for remanding a suspect or an accused person to police custody or judicial custody. There are several reasons for this including maintaining the dignity of an accused person, howsoever poor that person might be, the requirements of Article 21 of the Constitution and the fact that there is enormous overcrowding in prisons, leading to social and other problems as noticed by this Court in *In Re-Inhuman Conditions in 1382 Prisons*, 2017(4) RCR (Criminal) 416: 2017(5) Recent Apex Judgments (R.A.J.) 408 : (2017) 10 SCC 658*

*6. The historical background of the provision for bail has been elaborately and lucidly explained in a recent decision delivered in *Nikesh Tara chand Shah v. Union of India*, 2017 (13) SCALE 609 going back to the days of the Magna Carta. In that decision, reference was made to *Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v. State of Punjab*, (1980) 2 SCC 565 in which it is observed that it was held way back in *Nagendra v. King-Emperor*, AIR 1924 Calcutta 476 that bail is not to be withheld as a punishment. Reference was also made to *Emperor v. Hutchinson*, AIR 1931*

Allahabad 356 wherein it was observed that grant of bail is the rule and refusal is the exception. The provision for bail is therefore age-old and the liberal interpretation to the provision for bail is almost a century old, going back to colonial days.

7. However, we should not be understood to mean that bail should be granted in every case. The grant or refusal of bail is entirely within the discretion of the judge hearing the matter and though that discretion is unfettered, it must be exercised judiciously and in a humane manner and compassionately. Also, conditions for the grant of bail ought not to be so strict as to be incapable of compliance, thereby making the grant of bail illusory.”

6. Therefore, to elucidate further, this Court is conscious of the basic and fundamental principle of law that right to speedy trial is a part of reasonable, fair and just procedure enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. This constitutional right cannot be denied to the accused as is the mandate of the Apex court in “**Hussainara Khatoon and ors (IV) v. Home Secretary, State of Bihar, Patna**”, (1980) 1 SCC 98.

Besides this, reference can be drawn upon that pre-conviction period of the under-trials should be as short as possible keeping in view the nature of accusation and the severity of punishment in case of conviction and the nature of supporting evidence, reasonable apprehension of tampering with the witness or apprehension of threat to the complainant.

7. As far as the pendency of other cases and involvement of the petitioner in other cases is concerned, reliance can be placed upon the order of this Court rendered in CRM-M-25914-2022 titled as “***Baljinder Singh alias Rock vs. State of Punjab***” decided on 02.03.2023, wherein, while referring Article 21 of the Constitution of India, this Court has held that no doubt, at the time of granting bail, the criminal antecedents of the petitioner

are to be looked into but at the same time it is equally true that the appreciation of evidence during the course of trial has to be looked into with reference to the evidence in that case alone and not with respect to the evidence in the other pending cases. In such eventuality, strict adherence to the rule of denial of bail on account of pendency of other cases/convictions in all probability would lend the petitioner in a situation of denial the concession of bail.

8. **DECISION:**

In view of the discussions made hereinabove, the petitioner is hereby directed to be released on regular bail on his furnishing bail and surety bonds to the satisfaction of the trial Court/Duty Magistrate, concerned.

In the afore-said terms, the present petition is hereby allowed.

However, it is made clear that anything stated hereinabove shall not be construed as an expression of opinion on the merits of the case.

28.08.2024
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(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned:	Yes/No
Whether Reportable:	Yes/No