

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA AT CHANDIGARH

CRWP-1702-2024
Date of decision : 21.2.2024

Prempal ... Petitioner

VERSUS

State of Punjab and others ... Respondents

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE KARAMJIT SINGH

Present: Mr. Sunil Kumar Pandey, Advocate,
for the petitioner.

KARAMJIT SINGH, J.(Oral)

This petition has been filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India for issuance of a writ in the nature of Habeas Corpus directing official respondents to get the detenues, mentioned in para No. 4 of the petition, released from the illegal detention of private respondents.

2. Learned counsel for the petitioner confines his argument to the extent that District Magistrate, Jalandhar be deputed to decide the case and the present petition be disposed of with a direction to respondent No. 2 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 stipulated period.

3. A Division Bench of this Court in LPA No. 32 of 2013, titled 'Murti versus 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.”

4. Accordingly, this Criminal Writ Petition is disposed of with a direction to respondent No. 2 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 receipt of a certified copy of this order along with a copy of the writ petition.

February 21, 2024
Paritosh Kumar

(KARAMJIT SINGH)
JUDGE

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