



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

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Date of decision: 28.08.2024

1. CRM-M-16085-2023

PREM SINGHPetitioner

Versus

STATE OF HARYANA ...Respondent

2. CRM-M-31941-2023

CHARANJIT SINGHPetitioner

Versus

STATE OF HARYANA ...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE KULDEEP TIWARI

Present : Mr. Ashok Giri, Advocate
for the petitioner CRM-M-16085-2023.

Ms. Himani Anand, Advocate
for the petitioner in CRM-M-31941-2023.

Mr. Bhupender Singh, DAG, Haryana.

KULDEEP TIWARI. J.(Oral)

1. In both the petitions, the petitioners craves for indulgence of this Court for they being enlarged on regular bail, in case FIR No.278 dated 24.04.2022 under Sections 15 of NDPS Act, 1985 (Sections 29/27-A of NDPS Act, added later on), registered at Police Station Thanesar Sadar, District



Kurukshetra, therefore, being amenable by common decision, same are taken up together.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE PETITIONER

2. The allegations, as levelled against the present petitioners in the instant FIR, reads as under:-

“Today on 24.04.2022, I SI Gulab Singh 202/A, ESI Ramesh Kumar 160, HC Deepak Kumar 1069, HC Gurbax Singh 1090, C-1 Mahesh Kumar 55, were on private car bearing registration number HR-05-AW-5050 make Creata owned by HC Gurbax Singh and were present at Pipli Chowk, Pipli in connection with patrolling. Secret informer came to me SI and informed that Prem Singh s/o Swaran Singh r/o Village Bajrood, District Ropar Punjab does work of driving Canter bearing registration number PB-65-BB-2751 which is owned by him. Abovesaid has keep Charanjit Singh s/o Baldev Singh r/o Village Majra, Tehsil Nalagarh District Solan Himachal Pradesh in his Canter as cleaner. Abovesaid both whenever go to Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra etc. by loading goods in aforesaid Canter, they bring poppy husk in heavy quantity by purchasing it in lower price by loading in said canter. Abovesaid both alongwith their other friends sell aforesaid Poppy Husk in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh on a high price. Abovesaid Prem Singh and Charanjit Singh have been doing abovesaid business for many months continuously. Abovesaid Prem Singh and Charanjit Singh have started from Madhya Pradesh by loading goods and Poppy Husk in heavy quantity in abovesaid canter. After about one hour from now, they will approach towards Punjab from Karnal via Pipli in abovesaid vehicle. Abovesaid Canter is of red colour and having a tarpaulin of black colour over it. If naka is laid at GT road, Partapgarh turn now, then abovesaid Prem Singh and Charanjit Singh can be apprehended alongwith abovesaid Canter bearing registration number PB-65-BB-2751 alongwith Poppy Husk in heavy quantity. Information seemed true and reliable therefore at about



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12:30 PM, notice u/s 42 NDPS Act was prepared separately and sent to Sh.Ram Dutt HPS/DSP Kurukshetra District Kurukshetra through C-1 Mahesh Kumar 55 with a request to reach at the spot and for information. On the basis of aforesaid secret information, prima facie offence u/s 15/61/85 of NDPS Act is made out. Ruqa is being sent to police station Sadar Thanesar through ESI Ramesh Kumar 160 for registration of FIR. FIR number be informed after its registration. Special reports be sent to Senior officials. Another investigating officer be sent at the spot for further investigation. I SI alongwith other officials, am approaching to Sarsawati Bridge, Partapgarh Turn GT Pipli. Today at Pipli chowk Kurukshetra, CIA-2 Kurukshetra Dt.24.4.2022 at 12.40 PM.”

SUBMISSIONS OF LEARNED COUNSEL FOR THE PETITIONER

3. The learned counsel for the petitioners, in his asking for the hereinabove extracted relief, has made the following submissions:-

- (i) Petitioners have been falsely implicated in the present case;***
- (ii) The main thrust is upon the delay in conclusion of trial, as both the petitioners have suffered incarceration of more than 02 years, and 03 months, as on today;***
- (iii) Both the petitioners have clean antecedents, and has been involved in the instant FIR, with the allegations of carrying 515 kg of poppy husk, which undoubtedly fall within the ambit of commercial quantity;***
- (iv) Out of the total 32 prosecution witnesses cited in the final report, only 01 witness has been examined till date.***
- (v) The final report under Section 173 Cr.P.C., had already been filed on 13.04.2023.***

**SUBMISSIONS OF THE LEARNED STATE COUNSEL**

4. Per contra, the learned State counsel, opposed the grant of regular bail to the present petitioners, as the recovery effected from the present petitioners is of commercial quantity, as prescribed under the schedule attached with the NDPS Act, as both the petitioners were carrying 515 kg of poppy husk. Learned State counsel further informs this Court that in the instant FIR, total 06 persons have been arrayed as accused, whereas, 04 persons who were not caught on the spot have already been granted the relief of bail. Learned State counsel has placed on record the custody certificates *qua* the petitioners, as issued by the Deputy Superintendent, District Prison (Kurukshetra), Haryana. The same are taken on record. A perusal of the custody certificates reveals that both the petitioners have suffered incarceration of 02 years, 03 months and 22 days, as on today. A perusal of the custody certificate further reveals that both the petitioners are not involved in any other criminal case. Learned State counsel on instructions, imparted to him by the official respondent, submits that after conclusion of the investigation, the final report under Section 173 Cr.P.C., had already been filed on 13.04.2023. Learned State counsel further submits that out of the total 32 prosecution witnesses cited in the final report, only 01 witness has been examined till date.

ANALYSIS

5. Before embarking upon the process of evaluating the arguments addressed by the learned counsels for the parties and penning down any opinion upon the instant petition, it is deemed imperative to capture an overview of some significant legal propositions.

6. “*Bail is the Rule and Jail is an Exception*”. This basic principle of



criminal jurisprudence was laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, way back in 1978, in its landmark judgment titled ***“State of Rajasthan V. Balchand alias Baliay”, 1977 AIR 2447, 1978 SCR (1) 535***. This principle finds its roots in one of the most distinguished fundamental rights, as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Though the underlying objective behind detention of a person is to ensure easy availability of an accused for trial, without any inconvenience, however, in case the presence of an accused can be secured otherwise, then detention is not compulsory.

7. The right to a speedy trial is one of the rights of a detained person. However, while deciding application for regular bail, the Courts shall also take into consideration the fundamental precept of criminal jurisprudence, which is “the presumption of innocence”, besides the gravity of offence(s) involved.

8. In ***“Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v. State of Punjab”, (1980) 2 SCC 565 at 586-588***, the purpose of granting bail is set out by the Hon'ble Supreme Court with great felicity as follows:-

“27. It is not necessary to refer to decisions which deal with the right to ordinary bail because that right does not furnish an exact parallel to the right to anticipatory bail. It is, however, interesting that as long back as in 1924 it was held by the High Court of Calcutta in Nagendra v. King Emperor, AIR 1924 Calcutta 476 (479, 480) that the object of bail is to secure the attendance of the accused at the trial, that the proper test to be applied in the solution of the question whether bail should be granted or refused is whether it is probable that the party will appear to take his trial and that it is indisputable that bail is not to be withheld as a punishment. In two other cases which, significantly, are the 'Meerut Conspiracy cases observations are to be found regarding the right to bail which deserve a special mention. In K.N. Joglekar v. Emperor, AIR 1931



Allahabad 504 (SB) it was observed, while dealing with Section 498 which corresponds to the present Section 439 of the Code, that it conferred upon the Sessions Judge or the High Court wide powers to grant bail which were not handicapped by the restrictions in the preceding Section 497 which corresponds to the present Section 437. It was observed by the Court that there was no hard and fast rule and no inflexible principle governing the exercise of the discretion conferred by Section 498 and that the only principle which was established was that the discretion should be exercised judiciously. In Emperor v. H.L. Hutchinson, AIR 1931 Allahabad 356 at p. 358 it was said that it was very unwise to make an attempt to lay down any particular rules which bind the High Court, having regard to the fact that the legislature itself left the discretion of the Court unfettered. According to the High Court, the variety of cases that may arise from time to time cannot be safely classified and it is dangerous to make an attempt to classify the cases and to say that in particular classes a bail may be granted but not in other classes. It was observed that the principle to be deduced from the various sections in the Criminal Procedure Code was that grant of bail is the rule and refusal is the exception. An accused person who enjoys freedom is in a much better position to look after his case and to properly defend himself than if he were in custody. As a presumably innocent person he is therefore entitled to freedom and every opportunity to look after his own case. A presumably innocent person must have his freedom to enable him to establish his innocence.

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29. In Gurcharan Singh v. State (Delhi Admn.) (1978) 1 SCC 118 it was observed by Goswami, J., who spoke for the Court, that "there cannot be an inexorable formula in the matter of granting bail. The facts and circumstances of each case will govern the exercise of judicial discretion in granting or cancelling bail".

30. In American Jurisprudence (2d, Vol. 8, page 806, para 39) it is stated :



"Where the granting of bail lies within the discretion of the court, the granting or denial is regulated, to a large extent, by the facts and circumstances of each particular case. Since the object of the detention or imprisonment of the accused is to secure his appearance and submission to the jurisdiction and the judgment of the court, the primary inquiry is whether a recognizance or bond would effect that end."

It is thus clear that the question whether to grant bail or not depends for its answer upon a variety of circumstances, the cumulative effect of which must enter into the judicial verdict. Any one single circumstance cannot be treated as of universal validity or as necessarily justifying the grant or refusal of bail."

9. Also, in ***"Gudikanti Narasimhulu and others Versus Public Prosecutor, High Court of Andhra Pradesh"***, 1978 AIR (Supreme Court) 429, the Hon'ble Supreme Court, speaking through Krishna Iyer, J., has enunciated the principles of bail thus :

"9. Thus the legal principle and practice validate the court considering the likelihood of the applicant interfering with witnesses for the prosecution or otherwise polluting the process of justice. It is not only traditional but rational, in this context, to enquire into the antecedents of a man who is applying for bail to find whether he has a bad record-particularly a record which suggests that he is likely to commit serious offences while on bail. In regard to habitual, it is part of criminological history that a thoughtless bail order has enabled the bailee to exploit the opportunity to inflict further crimes on the member of society. Bail discretion, on the basis of evidence about the criminal record of a defendant, is therefore not an exercise in irrelevance.

10. The significance and sweep of Article 21 make the deprivation of liberty a matter of grave concern and permissible only when the law authorising it is reasonable, even-handed and geared to the goals of community good and State necessity spelt out in Article 19. Indeed, the considerations I have set out as criteria are germane to the



constitutional proposition I have deduced. Reasonableness postulates intelligent care and predicates that deprivation of freedom by refusal of bail is not for punitive purpose but for the bifocal interests of justice - to the individual involved and society affected.

11. We must weight the contrary factors to answer the test the reasonableness, subject to the need for securing the presence of the bail applicant. It makes sense to assume that a man on bail has a better chance to prepare of present his case than one remanded in custody. And if public justice is to be promoted. mechanical detention should be demoted. In the United States, which has a constitutional perspective close to ours, the function of bail is limited, 'community roots' of the applicant are stressed and, after the Vera Foundation's Manhattan Bail Project, monetary suretyship is losing ground. The considerable public expense in keeping in custody where no danger of disappearance or disturbance can arise, is not a negligible consideration. Equally important is the deplorable condition, verging on the inhuman, of our sub-jails, that the unrewarding cruelty and expensive custody of avoidable incarceration makes refusal of bail unreasonable and a policy favouring release justly sensible.

12. A few other weighty factors deserve reference. All deprivation of liberty is validated by social defence and individual correction along an anti-criminal direction. Public justice is central to the whole scheme of bail law. Fleeing justice must be forbidden but punitive harshness should be minimised. Restorative devices to redeem the man, even through community service, meditative drill, study classes or other resources should be innovated, and playing foul with public peace by tampering with evidence, intimidating witnesses or committing offences while on judicially sanctioned 'free enterprise', should be provided against. No seeker of justice shall play confidence tricks on the court or community. Thus, conditions may be hung around bail orders, not to cripple but to protect. Such is the holistic jurisdiction and humanistic orientation invoked by the



judicial discretion correlated to the values of our Constitution.

13. Viewed from this perspective, we gain a better insight into the rules of the game. When a person, charged with a grave offence, has been acquitted at a stage, has the intermediate acquittal pertinence to a bail plea when the appeal before this Court pends? Yes, it has. The panic which might prompt the accused to jump the gauntlet of justice is less, having enjoyed the confidence of the court's verdict once. Concurrent holdings of guilt have the opposite effect. Again, the ground for denial of provisional release becomes weaker when the fact stares us in the face that a fair finding if that be so - of innocence has been recorded by one court. It may not be conclusive, for the judgment of acquittal may be ex facie wrong, the likelihood of desperate reprisal, if enlarged, may be a deterrent and his own safety may be more in prison than in the vengeful village where feuds have provoked the violent offence. It depends. Antecedents of the man and socio-geographical circumstances have a bearing only from this angle. Police exaggerations of prospective misconduct of the accused, if enlarged, must be soberly sized up lest danger of excesses and injustice creep subtly into the discretionary curial technique. Bad record and policy prediction of criminal prospects to invalidate the bail plea are admissible in principle but shall not stampede the court into a complacent refusal.”

10. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***“Rabi Prakash Versus The State of Odisha”, Special Leave to Appeal (Criminal) No.4169 of 2023***, has also discussed the effect of Section 37 of the NDPS Act in such like cases of long custody. The relevant portion of the aforesaid judgment contained in para No.4 is reproduced as under:-

“4. As regard to the twin conditions contained in Section 37 of the NDPS Act, learned counsel for the respondent – State has been duly heard. Thus, the 1st



condition stands complied with. So far as the 2nd condition re: formation of opinion as to whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that the petitioner is not guilty, the same may not be formed at this stage when he has already spent more than three and a half years in custody. The prolonged incarceration, generally militates against the most precious fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution and in such a situation, the conditional liberty must override the statutory embargo created under Section 37(1)(b)(ii) of the NDPS Act.”

11. In the recent judgment passed by the **Hon'ble Supreme Court in Javed Gulam Nabi Shaikh Vs. State of Maharashtra and another, 2024 (3) RCR (Criminal), 494**, it has been specifically held that the right to speedy trial of offenders facing criminal charges is implicit in the broad sweep and content of article 21. The relevant extract of the same reads as under:-

18. Criminals are not born out but made. The human potential in everyone is good and so, never write off any criminal as beyond redemption. This humanist fundamental is often missed when dealing with delinquents, juvenile and adult. Indeed, every saint has a past and every sinner a future. When a crime is committed, a variety of factors is responsible for making the offender commit the crime. Those factors may be social and economic, may be, the result of value erosion or parental neglect; may be, the result of value erosion or parental neglect; may be, because of the stress of circumstances, or the manifestation of temptations in a milieu of affluence contrasted with indigence or other privations.

19. If the State or any prosecuting agency including the court concerned has no wherewithal to provide or protect the fundamental right of an accused to have a speedy trial as enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution then the State or any other prosecuting agency should not oppose the plea for bail on the ground that the crime committed is serious. Article 21 of the Constitution applies



irrespective of the nature of the crime.

20. We may hasten to add that the petitioner is still an accused; not a convict. The over-arching postulate of criminal jurisprudence that an accused is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty cannot be brushed aside lightly, howso- ever stringent the penal law may be.

12. This Court has examined the instant petitions on the touchstone of the hereinabove extracted settled legal principle(s) of law and is of the considered opinion that the instant petitions are amenable for being allowed.

13. The reason for forming the above inference emanates from the factum that:- (i) The petitioners are the first time offenders, and they have suffered incarceration of 02 years, 03 months and 22 days, as on today; (ii) Out of the total 32 prosecution witnesses cited in the final report, only 01 witness has been examined till date. (iii) The final report under Section 173 Cr.P.C., had already been filed on 13.04.2023, (iv) No fruitful purpose would be served by keeping the petitioners behind the bars, (v) Trial is not likely to conclude anytime soon.

FINAL ORDER

14. Considering the hereinabove made discussion, this Court deems it fit and appropriate to grant the concession of regular bail to the petitioners. Therefore, without commenting upon the merits and circumstances of the present cases, the present petitions are **allowed**. The petitioners are ordered to be released on bail on furnishing of bail bonds and surety bonds to the satisfaction of concerned Chief Judicial Magistrate/trial Court/Duty Magistrate.

15. However, anything observed here-in-above shall have no effect on the merits of the trial, and is only meant for deciding the present petitions.



16. However, it is clarified that if in future, the petitioners are found indulging in commission of similar offences, as are involved herein, the respondent-State shall be at liberty to make an appropriate application seeking cancellation of regular bail, as granted by this Court.

28.08.2024
amandeep

(KULDEEP TIWARI)
JUDGE

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