



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA  
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-28261-2024  
DECIDED ON: 01.10.2024

SUKHPREET SINGH ALIAS BABLU

.....PETITIONER

VERSUS

STATE OF PUNJAB

.....RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL

Present: Mr. Lovish Arora, Advocate  
for the petitioner.

Mr. Jaspal Singh Guru, AAG, 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 FIR No.139, dated 24.10.2023, under Section 22 of NDPS Act, registered at Police Station Nihal Singh Wala, District Moga.

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

*“Station House Officer, P.S. Nihal Singh Wala. Sir, Today, I, ASI alongwith HC Amarjit Singh 445/Moga, Ct Robinpreet Singh 626/Moga, PHG Buta Singh 23313 was present in the area of Police Station in regard to patrolling and checking of suspicious persons on private vehicle. When the police party reached near the bus*

*stand, Village Manuke while patrolling, then secret informer signaled and got the vehicle stopped and gave information to me ASI separately that Sukhpreet Singh @ Bablu son of Sevak Singh, resident of Phulewala Vehra, Village Manuke is habitual of selling intoxicants. Today also he has brought intoxicant tablets in heavy quantity from a smuggler and is coming from the side of Village Raoke towards Village Manuke on foot by road, he is Hindu gentleman and is wearing black shirt and blue coloured jeans pant. If raid is conducted upon him then Sukhpreet Singh alias Bablu can be caught with intoxicant tablets. This information is trustworthy and reliable. This act of Sukhpreet Singh @ Bablu fulfills the ingredients of offence under Section 22/61/85 NDPS Act and therefore ruga is being sent to police station through PHG Buta Singh 23313 for registration of case. Case be registered and FIR no. be informed. Special reports be issued and sent to higher officers and Illaqa Magistrate. PCR Moga be informed. I, ASI, am local rank and as such I am not competent to investigate the NDPS case in view of the ruling of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, Chandigarh. Therefore, regular NGO be sent for further investigation. I, ASI, alongwith companions, am heading as per the information of the secret informer. Sd/- Sher Bahadur ASI, PS Nihal Singh Wala.”*

### 3. Contentions

#### On behalf of the petitioner

Learned counsel for the petitioner contends that as per the prosecution story, 60 intoxicant tablets were recovered from the present petitioner. He further contends that the recovery has not been effected from the conscious possession of the petitioner and rather it has been effected

from the road side. He further contends that there is an unexplained delay of more than 6 days in sending the sample parcel to the FSL. It has been asserted on behalf of the petitioner that he is a man of clean antecedents as he is not involved in any other case.

**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 60 intoxicant tablets were recovered from the present petitioner, which consists of 8.04 grams of Etizolam.

4. **Analysis**

Be that as it may, considering the custody period i.e. 11 months and 05 days for which the petitioner has suffered incarceration; the petitioner is not involved in any other case, meaning thereby he is not a habitual offender, as is evident from custody certificate produced today before this Court; the recovery has not been effected from the conscious possession of the present petitioner in addition to the fact that investigation is complete, challan stands presented to Court on 02.02.2024, charges have been framed on 16.03.2024 and out of total 11 prosecution witnesses, none 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.”*

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.

5. 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.

(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)  
JUDGE

01.10.2024  
Poonam Negi

|                                  |               |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Whether speaking/reasoned</i> | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <i>Whether reportable</i>        | <i>Yes/No</i> |