

**CRM-M-34962-2024****1****IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA AT CHANDIGARH****CRM-M-34962-2024****Date of decision : September 17, 2024**

Bhupinder Singh @ Bhinda

....Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

....Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE KULDEEP TIWARI

Present : Mr. Kulwinder Singh Dhillon, Advocate, for the petitioner
Mr. Sahil R. Bakshi, AAG, Punjab

KULDEEP TIWARI,J. (ORAL)

1. Short reply dated 16.9.2024, by way of affidavit of Sh. Kamalmeet Singh, PPS, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Sub Division, Tarn Taran, District Tarn Taran and custody certificate of the petitioner are filed today in Court by the learned State counsel, and the same are taken on record. Copies thereof, are supplied to the counsel opposite.

2. Through the instant petition, the petitioner craves for indulgence of this Court for her being enlarged on regular bail, in case FIR No.88 dated 31.08.2017, under Sections 302, 201, 427, 34 of the IPC, registered at P.S. Verowal, District Tarn Taran.

ALLEGATIONS IN THE FIR

3. The present FIR derives its genesis from the statement of one Dharam Singh (hereinafter referred to as the 'complainant'). Succinctly



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stated, the death of complainant's son, namely, Harpreet Singh, has constituted the bedrock for registration of the present FIR. The relevant extract of the complainant's statement, as narrated in paragraph No.2 of the order dated 05.07.2024, wherethrough, petitioner's bail application has been dismissed by the learned Additional Sessions Judge concerned, is reproduced hereinafter:-

"...His son namely Harpreet Singh, aged about 32 years, is serving Indian Army. On 29.8.2017 Harpreet Singh had come from Leh Ladakh by airplane to the village as he was granted holiday by Army. On 30.8.2017, he had gone to meet Harpreet Singh who resides separately with his wife Lovepreet Kaur and two children. After talking with his son he returned to his home at about 8 P.M. On next day i.e. On 31.08.2017 at around 5.30 A.M., his daughter-in-law Lovepreet Kaur informed him that Harpreet Singh at midnight had gone in his car bearing registration number PB-46-V-8093 to collect his belongings which were left with his companions from Rayya but had not returned till that time. Then he along with his brother namely Baldev Singh son of Gura Singh, Sital Singh son of Gura Singh, Inder Singh son of Lachman Singh, his son namely Sandeep Singh and some other people of the village started searching Harpreet Singh. At around 7-30 P.M. That found that car of his son is parked on one side of the bridge of minor canal Uppal. Rear and front glass of car were broken by way of hitting with a brick. When they searched, pink coloured turban of Harpreet



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was found lying in agriculture field. His mobile phone was found from under the bridge. Many persons from the village and passersby had gathered there and with their help they started searching the both sides of banks of canal, in the trees and bushes but Harpreet Singh could not be found. Later some people from the village got down in the flowing canal and when they went at a distance from the bridge of canal towards Gharat of village Nagoke then dead body of his son Harpreet Singh was found in the water. Dead body was taken out and they saw there was a wound around the neck seemed to be caused with rope. Blood was flowing from his mouth and there was a blue coloured abrasion sign on the back from which it appears that some unidentified persons after strangulating his son had thrown him into the canal and also caused damage to the car.”

4. During investigation, the complainant got recorded his supplementary statement, that too after two days of the occurrence, alleging therein, that, his daughter-in-law Harpreet Kaur @ Lovepreet Kaur was having love affair with his nephew Bhupinder Singh (petitioner), and despite him and his deceased son, persuading his daughter-in-law to end her illicit relationship with Bhupinder Singh, she did not mend her conduct, rather said that she cannot leave Bhupinder Singh. Consequently, he expressed a suspicion that, his daughter-in-law, in connivance with her co-accused Bhupinder Singh, has killed his son by strangulating him with rope and in order to destroy the evidence against them, they placed the dead

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body of his son in Alto car and thereafter threw the same in river.

5. On the basis of this supplementary statement, Bhupinder Singh and his co-accused Harpreet Kaur @ Lovepreet Kaur were nominated as accused in the present FIR.

SUBMISSIONS OF LEARNED COUNSEL FOR THE PETITIONER

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

- (i) The entire case is based on circumstantial evidence;*
- (ii) Petitioner has undergone incarceration of approx. 7 years as on today;*
- (iii) Petitioner has clean antecedents, inasmuch as, he is not involved in any other case;*
- (iv) Trial is not likely to conclude anytime soon, as despite the charges becoming framed on dated 12.02.2018, the prosecution has not yet concluded its evidence, rather the trial is progressing at a snail's pace, inasmuch as, despite lapse of more than 6 years, only 12 prosecution witnesses, out of total 20 witnesses, have been examined so far, 5 witnesses have been given up by the prosecution, and 3 witnesses still remains to be examined, therefore, the trial is still at the stage of prosecution evidence;*
- (v) The evidence which has been collected by the prosecution, in fact, is not complete chain of circumstantial evidence, which could bring home the guilt of the present petitioner.*

SUBMISSIONS OF THE LEARNED STATE COUNSEL

7. Per contra, the learned State counsel has vehemently opposed



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the grant of bail to the petitioner, on the ground that, the petitioner had conspired to execute the murder of husband (deceased) his co-accused Harpreet Kaur @ Lovepreet Kaur. However, on instructions imparted to him by A.S.I. Lakhwinder Singh, he has verified that, out of total 20 prosecution witnesses, only 12 witnesses have been examined so far, 5 witnesses have been given up by the prosecution, and 3 still remains to be examined.

ANALYSIS

8. 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.

9. “*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.

10. The right to a speedy trial is one of the rights of a detained



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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.

11. 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."

12. 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 bi-focal 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.”



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FINAL ORDER

13. Be that as it may, considering the hereinabove made submissions, especially the fact that: (i) as per custody certificate, the petitioner has clean antecedents and he has suffered incarceration of approx. 07 years, and 03 days; and (ii) trial is progressing at a snail’s pace and there is no likelihood of its becoming concluded any time soon, inasmuch as, despite charges becoming framed more than 6 years back, 12 prosecution witnesses, out of total 20 witnesses, have been examined so far, 5 witnesses have been given up, and 3 witnesses still remains to be examined, therefore, the trial is still at the stage of prosecution evidence; this Court deems it appropriate to grant the concession of regular bail to the petitioner. Therefore, without commenting upon the merits and circumstances of the present case, the present petition is **allowed**. The petitioner is ordered to be released on bail on furnishing of bail bond and surety bond to the satisfaction of concerned Chief Judicial Magistrate/trial Court/Duty Magistrate.

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

September 17, 2024
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(KULDEEP TIWARI)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned ? Yes/No
Whether Reportable ? Yes/No