



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH

211

CRM-M-51995-2024

DATE OF DECISION: 25.10.2024

MANJIT SINGH @ MANJU

...PETITIONER

Versus

STATE OF PUNJAB

... RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL

Present: Mr. Y.S. Dhaliwal, Advocate for the petitioner(s).

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

SANDEEP MOUDGIL, J (ORAL)1. Relief Sought

This petition has been filed under Section 483 B.N.S.S 2023 for grant of regular bail to the petitioner in FIR No. 13 dated 07.03.2024 under Sections 61, 1, 14 of Excise Act and Section 420, 467, 468, 120-B of IPC registered at Police Station Julkan, Patiala.

2. Prosecution story set up in the present case as per the version in the FIR reads as under :-

'This time a Ruqa written by ASI Nisha Singh 1231/Pta P.S. Julkan, District Patiala has been received by hand PHG Bhajan Singh 29958 for registration of FIR against Jasbir Singh s/o Ram Kishan r/o Village Dahar, District Panipat, Deepak Kumar s/o Dharampal r/o Bidal district Sonipat and unknown persons u/s 61/1/14 of Excise Act, the contents of which are as follows, SHO PS Julkan Jai Hind, today I ASI along with ASI Manjeet Singh 1015/pta, senior constable Amarjeet Singh 2365/PTA, Amandeep Kaur 3407/PTA constable Nirmal Singh 2617/PTA, PHG Gurnam Singh 30224 PHG Bhajan Singh 29958, PHG Pawan Kumar 30269 were present within the jurisdiction of



the village Dudhan Gujraan on private vehicle along with laptop and printer in regard with patrolling of suspicious and bad elements time at around 7 PM a reliable informer came to me in person and informed me secretly and Jasbir Singh s/o Ram Kishan r/o village Dahar District Panipat aged about 38 years, French cut and Deepak Kumar s/o Dharampal r/o Bidal district Sonipat aged about 34 years French cut along with their other companions use to sell spirit/alcohol by taking supply in heavy quantity from the trucks going towards and from Punjab. Whom are waiting in vehicle No. HR-56-A 2789 make Mohinder Pick up to take delivery of Spirit/Alcohol from truck No. PB 65-AH 5713 at village Binjal. If they be raided secretly then heavy quantity of spirit/alcohol can be recovered from the above truck PB 65-AH 5713 vehicle No. HR-56-A 2789 make Mohindra Pick. That the information is reliable and concrete and therefore the offence under 61/1/14 under Excise Act is made out against the Jasbir Singh s/o Ram Kishan r/o Village Dahar, District Panipat, Deepak Kumar s/o Dharampal r/o Bidal district Sonipat. Therefore ruqa has been send to Police Station through PHG Bhajan Singh 29958 for registration of FIR against Jasbir Singh s/o Ram Kishan r/o Village Dahar, District Panipat, Deepak Kumar s/o Dharampal r/o Bidal district Sonipat. FIR Be registered and FIR No. be informed. Information be incharge control send room Patiala. Me ASI along with colleagues is heading for raid and recovery at the spot. Sd/ ASI Nishan Singh PS Julkan.'

3. **Contentions**

On behalf of the petitioner

Learned counsel for the petitioner has argued that the petitioner has been falsely implicated in the present case and was arrayed as an accused on the basis of disclosure statement of the co-accused who was arrested at the spot. He submits that the petitioner was not named in the FIR and was even not present at the spot. He further submits that the petitioner was neither the owner of the truck nor was employee of co-



accused-Sukhwinder Singh who is owner of the truck bearing registration No. PB-65-AH-5713, therefore, the petitioner cannot be termed as an accused of selling spirit/alcohol. He has further argued that the antecedents of the petitioner are clean. He further submits that no fruitful purpose would be served by keeping the petitioner behind the bars as conclusion of trial would take long time as out of total 13 Prosecution Witnesses, none has been examined so far.

On behalf of the State

On the other hand, learned State Counsel appearing on advance notice, accepts notice on behalf of respondent-State and has filed the custody certificate of the petitioner, which is taken on record. According to which, the petitioner is behind bars for 6 months and 16 days.

Learned State Counsel on instructions from the Investigating Officer opposes the prayer for grant of regular bail stating but is not in a position to controvert the submissions made by counsel for the petitioner. He informs the Court that in the present FIR challan stands presented on 05.06.2024 and charges stands framed on 16.07.2024.

4. Analysis

Be that as it may, from the above discussion, it can be culled out that the petitioner has already suffered sufficient incarceration i.e. 6 months and 16 days, antecedents of the petitioner are clean, meaning thereby he is not a habitual offender, and as per the principle of the criminal jurisprudence, no one should be considered guilty, till the guilt is proved beyond reasonable doubt, whereas in the instant case, challan stands presented on 05.06.2024 and charges stands framed on 16.07.2024, out of 13 prosecution witnesses, none has been examined so far which is



sufficient for this Court to infer that the conclusion of trial is likely to take considerable time and detaining the petitioner behind the bars for an indefinite period would solve no purpose.

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

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

The petition in the aforesaid terms stands allowed.

(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)
JUDGE

25.10.2024
anuradha

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