

IN THE HIGH COURT FOR THE STATES OF PUNJAB AND
HARYANA AT CHANDIGARH

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CRM-M-56250-2023 (O&M)
Date of decision: 09.04.2024

Arun Kumar ...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab and another ...Respondents

CORAM: HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE MANISHA BATRA

Present:- Mr. Ghulam Nabi Malik, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. A. S. Samra, AAG, Punjab.

MANISHA BATRA, J. (Oral)

1. CRM-7719-2024

Allowed as prayed for, subject to all just exceptions.

Documents are taken on record as Annexures P-5 to P-9.

2. CRM-M-56250-2023 (O&M)

The instant petition has been filed by the petitioner under Section 482 Cr.P.C. seeking quashing of FIR No. 381 dated 21.12.2012 (Annexure P-1), registered under Sections 498-A, 406 and 420 of IPC at Police Station City Sangrur, District Sangrur along with all the subsequent proceedings arising therefrom as well as for quashing of order dated 05.07.2014 (Annexure P-2), whereby the petitioner had been declared a proclaimed person in the said case by the trial Court.

3. Learned counsel for the petitioner, at the very outset, has restricted his argument to the extent of quashing of impugned order dated 05.07.2014 only, whereby the petitioner had been declared a proclaimed

person and he has submitted that he does not wish to press this petition with regard to quashing of FIR in question.

4. The aforementioned FIR was registered on the basis of a written complaint filed by the complainant Roohi Sharma alleging therein that she was married with the petitioner on 13.04.2012. Huge amount of money was spent on the marriage. Sufficient dowry articles including gold articles were given in the marriage. However, soon after the marriage, she was subjected to harassment and cruelty by her husband and his family members on account of demand of dowry. She alleged that her husband was having visa of England and after a few days of the marriage, he started pressuring the complainant to bring an amount of Rs. 5 Lakhs from her parents and threatened that otherwise, he would not return from England. On the repeated demands of her in-laws, the parents of the victim gave an amount of Rs. 2 Lakhs to them. They had told the victim that her husband would go only for 20 days and thereafter, he would return but he did not return from abroad. Further demands of cash amount were raised by the accused persons and on non-fulfillment of the same, she was ousted from the matrimonial home. Her istridhan was also criminally misappropriated by the accused persons. After registration of the FIR, investigation proceedings were initiated. After completion of necessary investigation and usual formalities, *challan* under Section 173 Cr.P.C. was presented and the trial had commenced. However, since the presence of the petitioner could not be secured, proceedings under Section 82 Cr.P.C. were initiated against him and he was declared a proclaimed person, vide impugned order dated 05.07.2014.

5. The present petition has been filed by the petitioner on the grounds and it has been argued by his counsel that while declaring him a proclaimed person, the proper procedure as laid down under Section 82 Cr.P.C. had not been followed. The petitioner even before registration of the aforesaid FIR on 21.12.2012 had left India for England, which is also evident from the contents of the FIR. The petitioner was never served at his ordinary place of residence in England and he had been declared a proclaimed person without following the proper procedure prescribed under Section 82 Cr.P.C. With these broad submissions, learned counsel for the petitioner has argued that the impugned order is liable to be set aside.

6. Learned State counsel has argued that the petitioner was having knowledge about the pendency of the trial and had intentionally avoided his appearance before the trial Court. Therefore, he was rightly declared a proclaimed person. Hence, it is urged that the petition is liable to be dismissed.

7. I have heard learned counsel for the parties and have also gone through the material placed on record.

8. On giving due deliberations to the contentions as raised by learned counsel for the parties and on an overall perusal of the orders passed by the trial Court from the date of initiating proceedings under Section 82 Cr.P.C. as against the petitioner till the date of declaring him a proclaimed person, I am of the considered opinion that the impugned order dated 05.07.2014 suffers from material illegalities and is liable to be quashed with all the consequential proceedings arising therefrom.

9. At the outset, it would be relevant to refer to the provision of Section 82 Cr.P.C., which provides for publication of proclamation against the person absconding. It reads as under:

“82. Proclamation for person absconding. –

(1) If any Court has reason to believe (whether after taking evidence or not) that any person against whom a warrant has been issued by it has absconded or is concealing himself so that such warrant cannot be executed, such Court may publish a written proclamation requiring him to appear at a specified place and at a specified time not less than thirty days from the date of publishing such proclamation.

(2) The proclamation shall be published as follows:-

(i) (a) it shall be publicly read in some conspicuous place of the town or village in which such person ordinarily resides;

(b) it shall be affixed to some conspicuous part of the house or homestead in which such person ordinarily resides or to some conspicuous place of such town or village;

(c) a copy thereof shall be affixed to some conspicuous part of the Court-house;

(ii) the Court may also, if it thinks fit, direct a copy of the proclamation to be published in a daily newspaper circulating in the place in which such person ordinarily resides.

(3) A statement in writing by the Court issuing the proclamation to the effect that the proclamation was duly published on a specified day, in the manner specified in clause (i) of sub-section (2), shall be conclusive evidence that the requirements of this section have been complied with, and that the proclamation was published on such day.

(4) Where a proclamation published under sub-section (1) is in respect of a person accused of an offence punishable under section 302, 304, 364, 367, 382, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 402, 436, 449, 459 or 460 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860), and such person fails to appear at the specified place and time required by the proclamation, the

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Court may, after making such inquiry as it thinks fit, pronounce him a proclaimed offender and make a declaration to that effect.

(5) The provisions of sub-sections (2) and (3) shall apply to a declaration made by the Court under sub-section (4) as they apply to the proclamation published under subsection (1). ”

10. There are catena of judgments of different High Courts discussing the requirements necessary for issuance and publication of proclamation against an absconder under Section 82 Cr.P.C. and for declaring him as a proclaimed person/offender. These requirements have been discussed from time to time in ***Rohit Kumar Vs. State of Delhi : 2008 CrL J. 2561, Rohit Kumar Vs. State of Delhi : 2008 CrL J. 2561, Bishundayal Mahton and others Vs. Emperor : AIR 1943 Patna 366, Devender Singh Negi Vs. State of U.P. : 1994 CrL LJ (Allahabad HC) 1783, Gurappa Gugal and others Vs. State of Mysore : 1969 CriLJ 826, Shokat Ali Vs. State of Haryana : 2020(2) RCR (Criminal) 339, Dilbagh Singh Vs. State of Punjab : (P&H) 2015 (8) R.C.R. (criminal) 166, Ashok Kumar Vs. State of Haryana and another : 2013 (4) RCR (Criminal) 550, Pawan Kumar Gupta Vs. The State of W.B. : 1973 CriLJ 1368, Birad Dan Vs. State : 1958 CriLJ 965, Birad Dan Vs. State : 1958 CriLJ 965, Negi alias Debu Vs. State of U.P. and another, 1994 Cri LJ 1783 and Pal Singh Vs. The State : 1955 CriLJ 318.***

11. The position of law as laid down in the above cited authorities may be summarized as under:

(i) Prior issuance of warrant of arrest by the Court is sine qua non for issuance and publication of the proclamation and the Court has to first issue warrant of arrest against the person concerned.

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(ii) There must be a report before the Court that the person against whom warrant was issued had absconded or had been concealing himself so that the warrant of arrest could not be executed against him. However, the Court is not bound to take evidence in this regard before issuing a Proclamation under Section 82 (1) of the Cr.P.C.

(iii) The Court cannot issue the Proclamation as a matter of course because the Police is asking for it. The Court must be prima facie satisfied that the person has absconded or is concealing himself so that the warrant of arrest, previously issued, cannot be executed, despite reasonable diligence.

(iv) The requisite date and place for appearance must be specified in the proclamation requiring such person to appear on such date at the specified place. Such date must not be less than 30 clear days from the date of issuance and publication of the proclamation.

(v) Where the period between issuance and publication of the proclamation and the specified date of hearing is less than thirty days, the accused cannot be declared a proclaimed person/offender and the proclamation has to be issued and published again.

(vi) The Proclamation has to be published in the manner laid down in Section 82 (2) of the Cr.P.C.. For publication, the proclamation has to be first publicly read in some conspicuous place of the town or village in which the accused ordinarily resides; then the same has to be affixed to some conspicuous part of the house or homestead in which the accused ordinarily resides or to some conspicuous place of such town or village and thereafter a copy of the proclamation has to be affixed to some conspicuous part of the Court-house. The three sub-clauses (a)- (c) in Section 82 (2)(i) of the Cr.P.C. are conjunctive and not disjunctive, which means that there would be no valid publication of the proclamation unless all the three modes of publication are proved. Where the Court so orders a copy of the proclamation has to be additionally published in a daily newspaper circulating in the place in which the accused

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ordinarily resides. Advisably, proclamation has to be issued with four copies so that one each of the three copies of the proclamation may be affixed to some conspicuous part of the house or homestead in which the accused ordinarily resides, to some conspicuous place of such town or village and to some conspicuous part of the Courthouse and report regarding publication may be made on the fourth copy of the proclamation. Additional copy will be required where the proclamation is also required to be published in the newspaper.

(vii) Statement of the serving officer has to be recorded by the Court as to the date and mode of publication of the proclamation.

(viii) The Court issuing the proclamation has to make a statement in writing in its order that the proclamation was duly published on a specified day in a manner specified in Section 82(2)(i) of the Cr.P.C.. Such statement in writing by the Court is declared to be conclusive evidence that the requirements of Section 82 have been complied with and that the proclamation was published on such day.

(xi) The conditions specified in Section 82(2) of the Cr.P.C. for the publication of a Proclamation against an absconder are mandatory. Any non-compliance therewith cannot be cured as an 'irregularity' and renders the Proclamation and proceedings subsequent thereto, a nullity.

12. On applying the above discussed position of law to the peculiar facts and circumstances of the present case and on a perusal of the copies of the zimini orders, which have been placed on record, it is apparent that vide order dated 05.03.2014, the trial Court, while initiating the proceedings under Section 82 Cr.P.C. against the petitioner, has not recorded its proper satisfaction that the petitioner had absconded or had been concealing himself so that such warrant could not be executed. The Court must be *prima facie* satisfied that the person has absconded or is concealing himself so that the

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warrant of arrest, previously issued, *cannot* be executed, despite reasonable diligence. Reliance in this regard can be placed upon ***Bishundayal Mahton and others Vs. Emperor : AIR 1943 Patna 366 and Devender Singh Negi Vs. State of U.P. : 1994 CrL LJ (Allahabad HC) 1783.*** Further, a perusal of the report of the executing police official would reveal that it was nowhere mentioned that as to on whose house, the proclamation was pasted. It is also not clear that if the proclamation was read in some conspicuous place or not, which is in clear violation of the provisions of Section 82 Cr.P.C.

13. Further, a perusal of the contents of the FIR itself reveals that the petitioner had left India for England even before registration of the FIR. This fact was very much in the knowledge of the complainant. Even the executing police official has mentioned so in his report submitted to the trial Court but there is nothing on record to show that any efforts whatsoever were made by the Court to ask the complainant about the address of the petitioner in England, where process could be sent to him. No letter to Ministry of External Affairs qua service of notice/warrants/proclamation against the petitioner is shown to have been written by the trial Court. As such, it can reasonably be presumed that the process never reached the petitioner and hence, he had no occasion to conceal himself. As such, the action of the trial Court by switching to the proclamation proceedings under Section 82 Cr.P.C. can itself be stated to be bad in the eyes of law. Reliance in this context can be placed upon ***Manjit Kaur vs. State of Punjab : 2013 SCC Online (P&H) 8663.***

14. Accordingly, in view of the discussion made above, the present petition is partly allowed and the impugned order dated 05.07.2014 (Annexure P-2), passed by the trial Court in the case arising out of FIR

No. 381 dated 21.12.2012 (Annexure P-1), registered under Sections 498-A, 406 and 420 of IPC at Police Station City Sangrur, District Sangrur, whereby the petitioner had been declared a proclaimed person, is quashed with all consequential proceedings arising therefrom.

15. However, the petitioner is directed to surrender before the Court concerned within a period of six weeks, subject to order for grant of anticipatory bail, if any passed on his petition to be filed under Section 438 of the Cr.P.C. In the absence of any order for grant of anticipatory bail and on such surrender, the petitioner shall be liable to be remanded to judicial custody subject to any order for grant of regular bail to be passed by the concerned Court in accordance with law.

16. Needless to observe that in case any application is filed before the concerned Court for grant of regular bail, then the concerned Court shall be bound to dispose of the same expeditiously and that nothing in this order shall be treated as expression of any opinion on merits so as to bind or influence the concerned Court in disposal of the same.

17. Till the time of appearance of the petitioner before the trial Court, his arrest shall remain stayed.

09.04.2024
Waseem Ansari

(MANISHA BATRA)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/reasoned

Yes

Whether reportable

Yes