

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

264

CRM-M-57863-2023 (O&M)
Date of decision: 19.01.2024

Amritpal Singh Gill

...Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE MANISHA BATRA

Present:- Mr. Talwinder Singh, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. P. S. Pandher, AAG, Punjab.

MANISHA BATRA, J. (Oral)

1. The instant petition has been filed by the petitioner under Section 482 Cr.P.C. seeking quashing of order dated 29.05.2019 (Annexure P-2), passed by the Judicial Magistrate First Class, Moga, in case titled as ***State vs. Jagroop Singh***, arising out of FIR No. 32 dated 04.04.2018, registered under Sections 406, 420, 354-A, 506 and 120-B of the IPC at Police Station Ajitwal, District Moga, whereby he had been declared a proclaimed person.
2. The aforementioned FIR was registered on the statement of complainant 'P' alleging therein that she was married with the petitioner. Huge amount of money was spent on the marriage. Sufficient dowry articles including gold articles were given in the marriage. The complainant used to

Neutral Citation No. 2024:PHHC:007485

live in New Zealand and after marriage, she lived for about two months in the matrimonial house and then she went back to New Zealand. She alleged that her sister-in-law (*Jethani*) and brother-in-law had taken huge amount of money from her in the presence of one Gurtej Singh. She further alleged that the petitioner, who is her husband, and other in-laws, in connivance with each other, have cheated her for Rs. 90 Lacs and her brother-in-law Parmjit Singh had also outraged her modesty. After registration of the FIR, investigation proceedings were initiated and after completion of the same, the challan was presented in Court. 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 29.05.2019.

3. 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 had left India for Poland on 10.12.2017, whereas the FIR was registered on 04.04.2018. The petitioner was never served at his ordinary place of residence in Poland 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.

4. Learned State counsel has filed the short reply. He 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

Neutral Citation No. 2024:PHHC:007485

was rightly declared a proclaimed person. Hence, it is urged that the petition is liable to be dismissed.

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

6. 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 29.05.2019 suffers from material illegalities and is liable to be quashed with all the consequential proceedings arising therefrom.

7. 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;

Neutral Citation No. 2024:PHHC:007485

- (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 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).”*

8. 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***

Neutral Citation No. 2024:PHHC:007485

: 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.

9. 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.
- (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

Neutral Citation No. 2024:PHHC:007485

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 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.

Neutral Citation No. 2024:PHHC:007485

(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.

10. On applying the above discussed position of law to the peculiar facts and circumstances of the present case and on a perusal of the zimini orders, which have been placed on record, it is apparent that on 31.01.2019, the trial Court, by observing that non-bailable warrants issued against the petitioner were received back with the report that his whereabouts were not known, recorded its satisfaction that presence of the petitioner could not be procured through ordinary process and issued proclamation under Section 82 Cr.P.C. for 06.03.2019. Thereafter, on two subsequent dates i.e. 06.03.2019 and 02.04.2019, the case was adjourned due to non-appearance of the serving police official. On 29.05.2019, when the case was taken up by the trial Court, the serving police official, namely Constable Lakhvir Singh, appeared and his statement was recorded, wherein he stated that on 20.02.2019, he had affixed the proclamation at a public place, at the given address of the petitioner as well as on the notice board of the Court complex requiring the petitioner to cause appearance on 06.03.2019, which means that thereby the petitioner was granted only 13 days' time to cause his appearance before the trial Court i.e. from 20.02.2019 to 06.03.2019. Hence, the same was in clear violation of the provisions of Section 82(1) Cr.P.C., as per which, a specified time of not less than 30 days is required to be given to the accused from the date of publishing such proclamation which is mandatory in nature.

11. Further, it has also come on record that the petitioner had left India for Poland on 10.12.2017, whereas the FIR in question was registered on 04.04.2018. The orders passed by the trial Court simply reveal that the warrants issued against the petitioner had been received back unexecuted without satisfying itself as to whether he was reported to have gone abroad or his whereabouts were otherwise not known. In the FIR itself, there was no mention that the petitioner was in India and no efforts whatsoever were made by the Court to ask the complainant the address of the petitioner of the country, 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.***

12. That apart, as discussed above, the proclamation was published for 06.03.2019 but the petitioner was declared a proclaimed person on 29.05.2019 and in the interregnum, two adjournments were granted by the trial Court for recording statements of the executing police official, though fresh publication was required to be issued, once the period between issuance of publication of proclamation and the specified period of hearing was less than 30 days but the trial Court, while passing the impugned order, had failed to consider the fact that it could not extend the time by simply adjourning the

case. Reference in this context can be made to ***Dilbagh Singh Vs. State of Punjab (P&H) : 2015 (8) R.C.R. (criminal) 166.***

13. This Court has also been apprised of the fact that co-accused of the petitioner, who faced full length trial, have been acquitted of the charges framed against them, vide judgment dated 14.08.2023 (Annexure P-10), passed by the trial Court. Therefore, the possibility of the petitioner's conviction on the same set of allegations is very bleak. Therefore, in my considered opinion, the petitioner was wrongly declared a proclaimed person in breach of the prescribed procedure. As such, the impugned order dated 29.05.2019 suffers from material illegalities and is liable to be quashed.

14. Accordingly, the present petition is allowed and the impugned order dated 29.05.2019 (Annexure P-2), passed by the Judicial Magistrate First Class, Moga, in case titled as ***State vs. Jagroop Singh***, arising out of FIR No. 32 dated 04.04.2018, registered under Sections 406, 420, 354-A, 506 and 120-B of the IPC at Police Station Ajitwal, District Moga, whereby he 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 four 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.

19.01.2024
Waseem Ansari

(MANISHA BATRA)
JUDGE

<i>Whether speaking/reasoned</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Whether reportable</i>	<i>Yes</i>