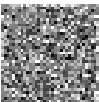


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2024:PHHC:158012



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA  
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-58917-2024 (O&M)  
DECIDED ON: 29.11.2024

GAJA NAND

.....PETITIONER

VERSUS

STATE OF HARYANA

.....RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL

Present: Ms. Pooja Jaglan, Advocate  
for the petitioner.

Mr. Chetan Sharma, DAG, Haryana.

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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.360, dated 14.06.2024, under Sections 394 and 34 IPC and Section 25/29 of Arms Act (Sections 395, 397, 201, 506 IPC added later on), registered at Police Station Chandnibagh, District Panipat.

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

*“To SHO sahab Police station Chandni Bagh Panipat Sir,  
I request that I am Harish Kumar son of Indra Singh  
Saini resident of Baljit Nagar Ward No. 12 Panipat. I  
work as Bank Mitra in Punjab National Bank Sabzi*

*Mandi branch Sanauli Road Panipat. For its cash collection I have opened a bank branch in Baljit Nagar Panipat. At which I have kept Vikas son Tuknarayan as servant. Today on 14.06.2024 at around 10:36 am my servant was in the branch and I was sitting with my brother Pradeep at the adjoining medical store. Suddenly my neighbour Nanhe came to me scared and said that four masked boys have entered the branch with weapons in their hands to loot. I immediately reached the branch with my brother Pradeep and found four masked goons who had made my servant sit on a chair by threatening him with a weapon and the goon wearing a white shirt and wearing a white cloth mask had taken the money bags from the office in his hand. All of them had weapons and ice breaking needles in their hands. When we tried to get our looted money bags back from them, one of the goons stabbed my brother Pradeep with the needle he was holding in his hand and ran away waving his weapon in the air leaving behind the looted money bags and due to the huge crowd gathered at the spot, he left his motorcycle number HR06AH5310 CD DELUX colour black at the spot. Strictest action should be taken against those four. My servant told me that the four goons looted about 4 lakh rupees of collection and took it away. Later I came to know that those four miscreants had also snatched a motorcycle from a boy. Strictest action should be taken against those four. I have also submitted the MLR of my brother Pradeep. I will also get the footage of the CCTV cameras installed in the shop prepared and submit it later. On the basis of this complaint, the present FIR was registered.”*

3. **Contentions**

**On behalf of the petitioner**

Learned counsel for the petitioner contends that the only allegation against the present petitioner is that of selling a country-made pistol along with two cartridges which was used by four co-accused persons who actually executed the offence of looting the currency notes of Rs.4 lacs. Apart from above, the petitioner has neither been attributed any other role nor was he present at the alleged spot of occurrence, as has been averred by learned counsel for the petitioner. She further contends that the petitioner was nominated as an accused in the instant FIR only on the basis of the disclosure statement of co-accused Prashant which was got recorded on 18.06.2024.

**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 the petitioner is the person who facilitated the commissioning of offence by providing the weapon which was used by the assailants and on that account state that liberal approach cannot be adopted against him and apart from that he is also involved in five other cases as is evident from custody certificate meaning thereby, he is a habitual offender and does not deserve the concession of regular bail.

4. **Analysis**

Be that as it may, considering the custody period i.e. 05 months and 11 days for which the petitioner has suffered incarceration; the petitioner

was nominated as an accused only on the basis of disclosure statement of co-accused Prashant; the petitioner was not present at the time of commissioning of the offence in addition to the fact that investigation is complete, challan stands presented to Court on 03.09.2024, charges are yet to be framed and total 22 prosecution witnesses are cited, which is suffice for this Court to infer that the conclusion of trial will take 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.

As far as the pendency of other cases and involvement of the petitioner in other cases is concerned, reliance can be placed upon the order of this Court rendered in CRM-M-25914-2022 titled as “***Baljinder Singh alias Rock vs. State of Punjab***” decided on 02.03.2023, wherein, while referring Article 21 of the Constitution of India, this Court has held that no doubt, at the time of granting bail, the criminal antecedents of the petitioner are to be looked into but at the same time it is equally true that the appreciation of evidence during the course of trial has to be looked into with reference to the evidence in that case alone and not with respect to the evidence in the other pending cases. In such eventuality, strict adherence to the rule of denial of bail on account of pendency of other cases/convictions

in all probability would land the petitioner in a situation of denial of concession of bail.

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.

29.11.2024

*Poonam Negi*

(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)  
JUDGE

*Whether speaking/reasoned*  
*Whether reportable*

*Yes/No*  
*Yes/No*