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2025:PHHC:023349



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRM-M-40066-2024
DECIDED ON: 18.02.2025

RANJIT SINGH ALIAS GAGGA

.....PETITIONER

VERSUS

STATE OF PUNJAB

.....RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SANDEEP MOUDGIL

Present: Mr. Parminder Singh Sekhon, Advocate and
Mr. Kaushal Chahal, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. Jasjit Singh Rattu, DAG Punjab.

SANDEEP MOUDGIL, J (ORAL)

1. Relief Sought

The jurisdiction of this Court has been invoked under Section 439 Cr.P.C., seeking regular bail to the petitioner in case FIR No.17 dated 21.02.2023, under Section 22 of NDPS Act, 198 registered at Police Station Badhni Kalan, District Moga.

2. Facts

Facts as narrated in the FIR reads as under:-

“To Station House Officer Badhni Kalan, Jai Hind today I the ASI along with ASI Gurmeet Singh 274/Moga, SCT Shivjant Singh No. 1128/Moga, PHG Bikkar Singh number 33089 on official vehicle bearing registration no. PB-29-X-6634 being driven by SCT Shivant Singh No. 1128/Moga had installed a Check Post in search of Bad elements at Bridge of Badhni Kalan Canal then a person was seen coming from the east bank of Canal/Baba

Deep Singh Gaushala side on foot, who on seeing the police party suddenly turned back, and he threw the black color polythene lifafa held in his right hand. The intoxicating got scattered, then I the ASI on suspicion, nabbed that person with the help of accompanying police officials and he was enquired about his identity, who on enquiry disclosed his name as Ranjeet Singh alias Gagga son of Lakhvir Singh, son of Major Singh, resident of ward no. 12, Badhni Kalan. Ranjeet Singh alias Gagga son of Lakhvir Singh resident of ward no. 12, Badhni Kalan had committed an offence under section 22-61-85 of NDPS Act by keeping intoxicating tablets in his possession. Ruga is being sent to police station through PHG Bikkar Singh No. 33089. For registration of case against Ranjeet Singh alias Gagga. FIR number should be informed after registration of case. Special reports should be issued. PCR Moga should be informed. Another investigation officer should be sent at the spot for further investigation. I the ASI alongwith accompanying police officials is present at the spot”

3. Contentions:

On behalf of the petitioner

Learned counsel for the petitioner submits that the petitioner has been falsely implicated in the present case and the recovery was not effected from the conscious possession of the petitioner as the same was collected from the ground. He further submits that the petitioner is in custody since 22.02.2023 and first time offender, as he is not involved in any other case.

On behalf of the State

Learned State counsel has filed the custody certificate of the petitioner, which is taken on record. He prays for dismissal of the present petition stating that the quantity recovered from the petitioner is commercial in nature i.e., 10 strips of Etezola-MD 0.5 (each strip containing 10 tablet) total 100 intoxicant tablets, each weighting 203 mg, in total 20.3 grams Etizolma salt.

4. Analysis

Considering the custody period undergone by the petitioner i.e., 1 year, 11 months and 26 days and is not involved in any other case, as is evident from the perusal of the custody certificate; investigation is complete, wherein conclusion of trial shall take considerable time as out of 11 prosecution witnesses, only 7 have been examined after framing of charges on 31.07.2023 so far, no useful purpose would be served by keeping the petitioner behind bars for uncertain period, wherein “*bail is a rule and jail is an exception*” and it would also violate the principle of right to speedy trial and expeditious disposal under Article 21 of Constitution of India, as has been time and again discussed by this Court, while relying upon the judgment of the Apex Court passed in ***Dataram Singh vs. State of Uttar Pradesh & Anr. 2018(2) R.C.R. (Criminal) 131.*** 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.

5. **DECISION:**

In view of the discussions made hereinabove, the petitioner is hereby directed to be released on regular bail on 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.

(SANDEEP MOUDGIL)
JUDGE

18.02.2025

Meenu

Whether speaking/reasoned	Yes/No
Whether reportable	Yes/No