

HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA**Bench: Justice Kuldeep Tiwari****Date of Decision: February 13, 2024**

CRM-M-63236-2023

JAGSIR SINGH ALIAS BILLA -PETITIONER**Versus****STATE OF PUNJAB -RESPONDENT****Legislation:**

Sections 307, 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and Section 25 of the Arms Act, 1959, (offences under Sections 379B, 411, 120B, 473 of the IPC, 1860 added subsequently).

Subject: Application for regular bail by the petitioner, Jagsir Singh alias Billa, in connection with FIR No.388 dated 09.08.2023, for various offenses including attempt to murder and arms act violations.

Headnotes:

Criminal Law – Bail Application –High Court granted regular bail to the petitioner in a case involving allegations of gang involvement and firing at police. The petitioner, accused under Sections 307, 34 of the IPC, 1860, and Section 25 of the Arms Act, 1959, with additional charges, sought bail after about six months of incarceration. [Para 1, 11-12]

Allegations Against Petitioner –Detailed the circumstances leading to the petitioner's arrest, including the recovery of firearms and the alleged

association with the Bambiha Gang. Highlighted the police's version of events and the materials recovered from the petitioner and co-accused. [Para 2]

Petitioner's Submissions – Argued false implication, lack of substantial evidence linking him to the Bambiha Gang, and non-involvement in the firing incident. Emphasized co-accused's bail, the petitioner's clean record, and the delay in trial proceedings. [Para 3]

State's Opposition – The State opposed bail, citing the gravity of the allegations and the petitioner's alleged involvement in firing at police officers. [Para 4]

Legal Principles for Bail – Cited Supreme Court precedents emphasizing bail as a rule and detention as an exception, underscoring the right to a speedy trial and the presumption of innocence. Discussed the balance between individual liberty and societal interests in bail considerations. [Paras 6-9]

Decision – Grant of Bail – Considering the lack of concrete evidence linking the petitioner to the Bambiha Gang, the time already spent in custody, the grant of bail to a co-accused, and the early stage of the trial, the Court granted regular bail. Imposed conditions and clarified that the observations made were solely for deciding the bail application and should not influence the trial's merits. [Paras 10-13]

Referred Cases:

- State of Rajasthan v. Balchand alias Baliay, 1977 AIR 2447, 1978 SCR (1) 535
- Nikesh Tarachand Shah v. Union of India, (2018) 11 SCC 1
- Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v. State of Punjab, (1980) 2 SCC 565
- Siddharam Satlingappa Mhetre v. State of Maharashtra, Criminal Appeal No.2271 of 2010

Representing Advocates:

Mr. Karanjeet Singh Brar for the petitioner.

Mr. Pardeep Bajaj, D.A.G., Punjab for the respondent.

KULDEEP TIWARI, J. (ORAL)

1.Through the instant petition, the petitioner craves for indulgence of this Court for his being enlarged on regular bail, in case FIR No.388 dated 09.08.2023, under Sections 307, 34 of the IPC, 1860, and, Section 25 of the Arms Act, 1959, (offences under Sections 379B, 411, 120B, 473 of the IPC, 1860, added subsequently), registered at P.S. City Barnala, District Barnala.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE PETITIONER

2.The genesis of the prosecution case is embodied in a secret information, which led to arrest of the present petitioner and other coaccused, besides also led to recovery of arms, a firearm magazine, and, a car key from them. The gist of the allegations, as summarily narrated in paragraph No.3 of the order dated 16.10.2023, whereby, the learned Sessions Judge, Barnala, has declined to grant regular bail to the petitioner, is extracted hereinafter:-

“3. As per case of prosecution, when on 09.08.2023, police party headed by Inspector Baljit Singh has laid barricade near the over-bridge on Sangrur side near Handiaya, where police party of ASI Kulwinder Singh also came present and they were talking about the gangsters. It was at about 02.30 pm, he received secret information that 4 gangsters related to Bambiha Gang are coming from Tapa towards Sangrur side in car no.PB22X-5258 and they are having illegal weapons. On this information, police party was put on alert and in the meantime, one swift car came at high speed from opposite side and the persons started firing towards police party. Inspector Baljit Singh stopped the vehicle by firing on front tyre of the said car. The person sitting on conductor side on front seat alighted from the vehicle and fired towards police party, which crossed from the pent of the Inspector Baljit Singh. After giving warning to the accused, they were apprehended on the spot. On search of accused, Yadwinder Singh, 0.32 bore pistol was recovered and on search of Sukhwinder Khan, one pistol 0.30 bore was recovered. Similarly, one 0.30 bore pistol was recovered from the possession of Husanpreet Singh. One key of the vehicle alongwith one magazine of 0.30 bore was recovered from

accused Jagsir Singh. The case property was taken into police possession and all the accused were arrested on the spot.”

SUBMISSIONS OF LEARNED COUNSEL FOR THE PETITIONER

3. The learned counsel for the petitioner, in his asking for the hereinabove extracted relief, has made the following submissions:-

(i) Petitioner has been falsely implicated in the present case, asexcept the alleged secret information, the investigating agency is not seized of any legal and tangible evidence to establish that the petitioner is a Member of ‘Bambiha Gang’.

(ii) Even if the allegations, as narrated in the FIR, are taken to be a gospel truth, yet there exists no circumstances which may debar the petitioner from claiming the relief of regular bail, inasmuch as, he is evidently not the person, who had opened fire upon the police officials, rather he is only alleged to be driving the car concerned, and moreover, the recovery as allegedly effected from him is only of a magazine carrying 09 live cartridges of 30 bore, and, of a car key.

(iii) Co-accused Husanpreet Singh Gill has already been enlarged on bail by this Court, through drawing an order on 11.01.2024, upon CRM-M-86-2024 ;

(iv) Petitioner has clean antecedents, as he is not involved in any other criminal case;

(v) Petitioner has undergone incarceration of approx. 6 months; (vi) Trial is not likely to conclude anytime soon, as no prosecution witness has yet been examined, therefore, keeping the petitioner behinds the bars would serve no purpose;

SUBMISSIONS OF THE LEARNED STATE COUNSEL

4. *Per contra*, the learned State counsel has placed on record the custody certificate of the petitioner, as issued by the Superintendent, District Jail, Barnala, and, has vehemently opposed the grant of regular bail to the petitioner. He submits that the allegations against the petitioner are grave in nature, inasmuch as, he along with other co-accused had opened firing on police officials, and, he has been arrested by Punjab Police with great difficulty.

5. Furthermore, on instructions imparted to him by A.S.I. Harvinder Pal Singh, he verifies that none of the prosecution witnesses has yet been examined, and, that the petitioner is not involved in any other criminal case. Moreover, upon a specific query being posed by this Court, he submits that there is no documentary evidence to connect the present petitioner with the notorious Bambiha Gang.

ANALYSIS

6. *“Bail is the Rule and Jail is an Exception”*. This basic principle of criminal jurisprudence was laid down by the Hon’ble Supreme Court, way back in 1978, in its landmark judgment titled **“State of Rajasthan V. Balchand alias Baliay”, 1977 AIR 2447, 1978 SCR (1) 535**. This principle finds its roots in one of the most distinguished fundamental rights, as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Though the underlying objective behind detention of a person is to ensure easy availability of an accused for trial, without any inconvenience, however, in case the presence of an accused can be secured otherwise, then detention is not compulsory.

7. The right to a speedy trial is one of the rights of a detained person. However, while deciding application for regular bail, the Courts shall also take into consideration the fundamental precept of criminal jurisprudence, which is “the presumption of innocence”, besides the gravity of offence(s) involved.

8. In **“Nikesh Tarachand Shah V. Union of India”, (2018) 11 SCC 1**, the Hon’ble Supreme Court has recorded the following:-

“14. In Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v. State of Punjab, (1980) 2 SCC 565 at 586-588, the purpose of granting bail is set out with great felicity as follows:-

“27. It is not necessary to refer to decisions which deal with the right to ordinary bail because that right does not furnish an exact parallel to the right to anticipatory bail. It is, however, interesting that as long back as in 1924 it was held by the High Court of Calcutta in Nagendra v. King Emperor [AIR 1924 Cal 476, 479, 480 : 25 Cri LJ 732] that the object of bail is to secure the attendance of the accused at the trial, that the proper test to be applied in the solution of the question whether bail should be granted or refused is whether it is probable that the party will appear to take his trial and that it is indisputable that bail is not to be withheld as a punishment. In two other cases which, significantly, are the ‘Meerut Conspiracy cases’ observations are to be found regarding the right to bail which deserve a special mention. In K.N. Joglekar v. Emperor [AIR 1931 All 504 : 33 Cri LJ

94] it was observed, while dealing with Section 498 which corresponds to the present Section 439 of the Code, that it conferred upon the Sessions Judge or the High Court wide powers to grant bail which were not handicapped by the restrictions in the preceding Section 497 which corresponds to the present Section 437. It was observed by the court that there was no hard and fast rule and no inflexible principle governing the exercise of the discretion conferred by Section 498 and that the only principle which was established was that the discretion should be exercised judiciously. In *Emperor v. Hutchinson* [AIR 1931 All 356, 358 : 32 Cri LJ 1271] it was said that it was very unwise to make an attempt to lay down any particular rules which will bind the High Court, having regard to the fact that the legislature itself left the discretion of the court unfettered. According to the High Court, the variety of cases that may arise from time to time cannot be safely classified and it is dangerous to make an attempt to classify the cases and to say that in particular classes a bail may be granted but not in other classes. It was observed that the principle to be deduced from the various sections in the Criminal Procedure Code was that grant of bail is the rule and refusal is the exception. An accused person who enjoys freedom is in a much better position to look after his case and to properly defend himself than if he were in custody. As a presumably innocent person he is therefore entitled to freedom and every opportunity to look after his own case. A presumably innocent person must have his freedom to enable him to establish his innocence.

28. Coming nearer home, it was observed by Krishna Iyer, J., in *Gudikanti Narasimhulu v. Public Prosecutor* [(1978) 1 SCC 240 : 1978 SCC (Cri) 115] that: (SCC p. 242, para 1)

“... the issue of bail is one of liberty, justice, public safety and burden of the public treasury, all of which insist that a developed jurisprudence of bail is integral to a socially sensitized judicial process. . . . After all, personal liberty of an accused or convict is fundamental, suffering lawful eclipse only in terms of procedure established by law. The last four words of Article 21 are the life of that human right.”

29. In *Gurcharan Singh v. State (Delhi Administration)* [(1978) 1 SCC 118 : 1978 SCC (Cri) 41] it was observed by Goswami, J., who spoke for the court, that: (SCC p. 129, para 29)

“There cannot be an inexorable formula in the matter of granting bail. The facts and circumstances of each case will govern the exercise of judicial discretion in granting or cancelling bail.”

30. In *AMERICAN JURISPRUDENCE* (2d, Volume 8, p. 806, para 39), it is stated:

“Where the granting of bail lies within the discretion of the court, the granting or denial is regulated, to a large extent, by the facts and circumstances of each particular case. Since the object of the detention or imprisonment of the accused is to secure his appearance and submission to the jurisdiction and the judgment of the court, the primary inquiry is whether a recognizance or bond would effect that end.”

It is thus clear that the question whether to grant bail or not depends for its answer upon a variety of circumstances, the cumulative effect of which must enter into the judicial verdict. Any one single circumstance cannot be treated as of universal validity or as necessarily justifying the grant or refusal of bail.”

9. Also, in ***Siddharam Satlingappa Mhetre v. State of Maharashtra, Criminal Appeal No.2271 of 2010***, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has insisted upon striking a perfect balance of sanctity of an individual's liberty as well as the interest of the society, in grant or refusing bail. The relevant extract of the judgment (supra) is reproduced hereinafter:-

3. The society has a vital interest in grant or refusal of bail because every criminal offence is the offence against the State. The order granting or refusing bail must reflect perfect balance between the conflicting interests, namely, sanctity of individual liberty and the interest of the society. The law of bails dovetails two conflicting interests namely, on the one hand, the requirements of shielding the society from the hazards of those committing crimes and potentiality of repeating the same crime while on bail and on the other hand absolute adherence of the fundamental principle of criminal jurisprudence regarding presumption of innocence of an accused until he is found guilty and the sanctity of individual liberty.

10. This Court has examined the instant petition on the touchstone of the hereinabove extracted settled legal principle(s) of law and is of the considered opinion that the instant petition is amenable for being allowed.

11. The reason for forming the above inference emanates from the factum that:- (i) the investigating agency is not seized of any tangible documentary evidence, which may suggest that the petitioner is a member of the notorious Bambiha Gang; (ii) as per custody certificate (supra), the petitioner has suffered incarceration of approx. 6 months, and, he is not involved in any other criminal case; (iii) Co-accused Husanpreet Singh Gill has already been

enlarged on bail by this Court; (iv) trial is at its initial stage and is not likely to conclude anytime soon, as none of the prosecution witnesses has yet been examined, therefore, keeping the petitioner behind the bars, would serve no gainful purpose.

FINAL ORDER

12. Considering the hereinabove made discussion, this Court deems it appropriate to grant the concession of regular bail to the petitioner. Therefore, without commenting upon the merits and circumstances of the present case, the present petition is **allowed**. The petitioner is ordered to be released on bail on furnishing of bail bond and surety bond to the satisfaction of concerned Chief Judicial Magistrate/trial Court/Duty Magistrate.

13. However, in case, at any given point of time hereinafter, the petitioner is found indulging in commission of any similar offence(s), the respondent-State shall be at liberty to seek cancellation of the relief, as granted hereinabove by this Court. Moreover, anything observed hereinabove shall have no effect on the merits of the trial and is meant for deciding the present petition only.

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