IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
CRIMINAL APPELLATE JURISDICTION

WRIT PETITION NO.5509 OF 2026

Sajnya Lakha Pawar .. Petitioner

Versus

The State of Maharashtra .. Respondent

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- Ms. Swati Pandey, Advocate i/by M. B. Shirsat for Petitioner appointed through legal aid.
- Ms. Rajeshree V. Newton, APP for Respondent No.1 – State.
- Ms. Priyanka Chavan, Advocate for Respondent No.2 appointed through legal aid.
- PSI - M. D. Bahadkar, Khalapur Raigad.

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CORAM : MILIND N. JADHAV, J.

DATE : OCTOBER 30, 2026

P.C.:

**1.** Heard Ms. Pandey, learned Advocate holding for Mr. Shirsat on behalf of Petitioner appointed through legal aid; Ms. Newton, learned APP for Respondent No.1 and Ms. Chavan, learned Advocate for Respondent No.2 -victim appointed through legal aid.

**2.** This is a Petition wherein Petitioner is indicted and arrested in connection with C.R. No.146 of 2019 registered with Khalapur Police Station for offences punishable under Sections 363, 366, 376(1), 376(2)(f)(i)(n), of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and Sections 3(a), 4, 5(j), 2(l) and 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

**3.** On perusal of the papers and the copy of the charge-sheet which is placed before the Court, it is seen that there are two Accused persons in the present crime. In so far as the present Petitioner is concerned, he is arraigned as Accused No.1. He is arrested on 07.06.2019 and is in incarceration for the past 7 years 4 months 23 days. The trial has commenced but only one witness has been examined and for the last four years there has been no progress in the trial at all.

**4.** Considering the length of the long incarceration, I am inclined to consider the case of Petitioner. This Court received a letter dated 17.09.2026 from the jail, pursuant to which the present Petition was listed and the charge-sheet papers were directed to be placed before the Court.

**5.** In the case of ***Sandeep Kumar Bafna Vs. State of Maharashtra***[1]***,*** the Supreme Court in paragraph No.25 has observed the following:-

> *"25. The upshot of this analysis is that no vested right is granted to a complainant or informant or aggrieved party to directly conduct a prosecution. So far as the Magistrate is concerned, comparative latitude is given to him but he must always bear in mind that while the prosecution must remain being robust and comprehensive and effective it should not abandon the need to be free, fair and diligent. So far as the Sessions Court is concerned, it is the Public Prosecutor who must at all times remain in control of the prosecution and a counsel of a private party can only assist the Public Prosecutor in discharging its responsibility. The complainant or informant or aggrieved party may, however, be heard at a crucial and*

1 (2014) 16 SCC 623

> *critical juncture of the Trial so that his interests in the prosecution are not prejudiced or jeopardized.* ***It seems to us that constant or even frequent interference in the prosecution should not be encouraged as it will have a deleterious impact on its impartiality.*** *If the Magistrate or Sessions Judge harbours the opinion that the prosecution is likely to fail, prudence would prompt that the complainant or informant or aggrieved party be given an informal hearing. Reverting to the case in hand, we are of the opinion that the complainant or informant or aggrieved party who is himself an accomplished criminal lawyer and who has been represented before us by the erudite Senior Counsel, was not possessed of any vested right of being heard as it is manifestly evident that the Court has not formed any opinion adverse to the prosecution.* ***Whether the Accused is to be granted bail is a matter which can adequately be argued by the State Counsel.*** *We have, however, granted a full hearing to Mr. Gopal Subramanium, Senior Advocate and have perused detailed Written Submissions since we are alive to impact that our opinion would have on a multitude of criminal trials."*

**6.** It is settled law that a Court while granting Bail has to keep in mind the principal rule of bail which is to ascertain whether the Accused is likely to appear before the court for trial. There are other broad parameters also like gravity of offence, likelihood of Accused repeating the offence while on bail, whether he would influence the witnesses and tamper with the evidence, his antecedents which are required to be considered in such cases.

**7.** It is seen that while dealing with matters seeking Bail the material available for consideration and adjudication is limited. It is brought to the notice of the Court that trials are taking perpetuity to be concluded and prisons are also simultaneously overcrowded in some segments. This Court regularly deals with matter seeking Bail of under-trials who have been in custody for long incarceration, and is also equally aware of the conditions of our prisons. To give an example in

the city of Mumbai, a Report dated 12.12.2024 made by the Superintendent of Mumbai Central Prison addressed to the Chief Government Pleader was placed before this Court by the Public Prosecutor which stated that the Mumbai Central Prison (Arthur Road Jail) is overcrowded beyond its sanctioned capacity by more than 5 – 6 times and every barrack sanctioned to house 50 inmates, as on date houses anywhere between 220 – 250 inmates. This situation is similar in almost all jails in the State. Such an incongruity leads us to answer the proposition: **"*How can Courts find a balance between the two polarities?"***

**8.** Argued before me is a case concerning liberty of an under-trial who has been incarcerated for 7 years 4 months 23 days, a situation impacting the rights of the undertrial conferred by Article 21 of Constitution to speedy justice as also personal liberty. In so far as the power of high courts to grant bail is concerned, when the case is such that involves a question of personal liberty of an undertrial who is incarcerated for a very long period pending trial, the powers are wide and unfettered by conditions, the principle rule being that bail is the rule and refusal is the exception, allowing accused persons to better prepare their defense.

**9.** In the case of ***Emperor Vs. H.L. Hutchinson***[2], the Allahabad High Court, as far back as in the year 1931 held that power of granting

2 AIR 1931 ALL 356

bail conferred on High Court is entirely unfettered by any conditions. It held that legislature has given the High Court and the Court of Session discretion unfettered by any limitation other than that which controls all discretionary powers vested in a Judge, viz. that the discretion must be exercised judiciously. The Court has given primacy to the fact that accused person if granted bail will be in a much better position to defend himself. In this very case, it was delineated that grant of Bail is the Rule and refusal is an exception. This was in the famous Meerut Conspiracy case.

**9.1.** Justice Mukerji writing for the Bench held as under:-

> *"9. Speaking for myself, I think it very unwise to make an attempt to lay down any particular rules for the guidance of the High Court, having regard to the fact that the legislature itself left the discretion of the Court entirely unfettered. The reason for this action on the part of the legislature is not far to seek. The High Court might be safely trusted in this matter and it goes without saying that it would act in the best interests of justice whether it decides in favour of the prosecution or the defence. The variety of cases that may arise from time to time cannot be safely classified and it will be 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.*
>
> *This being my reading of the law, I proceed to see whether this is a case in which the applicants ought to be let out on bail.*
>
> *On general principles, and on the principles on which sections 496 and 497 (as amended in 1923) are framed, the grant of bail should be the rule and refusal of bail should be the exception. In the case of a bailable offence, the law expressly says that if the accused person applies for bail he shall be released (section 496). Section 497 applies to cases of non-bailable offence and there it is said that the accused person shall be released on bail except where there appears to be a reasonable ground for believing that he has been guilty of a very heinous offence, namely one which may be punished by either death or by transportation for life : section 497(1). Again it is laid down that where, at any stage of the investigation or trial, there are not reasonable grounds for believing that the accused person*

*has committed a non-bailable offence, but there are sufficient grounds for further inquiry into his guilt, the accused shall be released on bail : section 497(2).*

*The principle to be deduced from sections 496 and 497 of the Criminal Procedure Code, therefore, is that* ***grant of bail is the rule and refusal is the exception.*** ***(emphasis underlined)*** *That this must be so is not at all difficult to see. An accused person is presumed under the law to be innocent till his guilt is proved. As a presumably innocent person he is entitled to freedom and every opportunity to look after his own case. It goes without saying that an accused person, if he enjoys freedom, will be in a much better position to look after his case and to properly defend himself than if he were in custody. One of the complaints made by the applicants in this case is that their letters sent from the custody have been opened and inspected and censored, and, therefore, they were not in a position to conduct their defence with the aid of such friends as may he outside the prison. As I have said, it is obvious that a presumably innocent person should have his freedom to enable him to establish his innocence.*

*This being the rule, there may, of course, be exceptions. I will not attempt to lay down any cases of exceptions, because these cases before us are not exceptions and I do not want to say anything which will be only in the nature of an obiter dictum."*

**9.2.** Justice Boys writing a concurrent view held as under:-

*"As to the object of keeping an accused person in detention during the trial, it has been stated that the object is not punishment; that to keep an accused person under arrest with the object of punishing him on the assumption that he is guilty, even if eventually he is acquitted, is improper. This is most manifest. The only legitimate purposes to be served by keeping a person under trial in detention are to prevent repetition of the offence with which he is charged, where there is apparently danger of such repetition, and to secure his attendance at the trial. The first of these purposes clearly to some extent involves an assumption of the accused's guilt, but the very trial itself is based on a prima facie assumption of the accused's guilt and it is impossible to hold that in some circumstances it is not a proper ground to be considered. The main purpose, however, is manifestly to secure the attendance of the accused."*

**10.** In the case of ***Satender Kumar Antil Vs. Central Bureau of Investigation***[3], in paragraph Nos.6 to 15 the Supreme Court considered the prevailing situation of prisons in India, definition of trial and bail,

3 (2022) 10 SCC 51

principle of presumption of innocence and reiterated the well recognized principle that bail is the rule and jail is the exception in bail jurisprudence on the touchstone of Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Paragraph Nos.6 to 15 of the judgment reads as under:-

> *"Prevailing situation*
>
> *6. Jails in India are flooded with undertrial prisoners. The statistics placed before us would indicate that more than 2/3rd* long incarceration *of the inmates of the prisons constitute undertrial prisoners. Of this category of prisoners, majority may not even be required to be arrested despite registration of a cognizable offence, being charged with offences punishable for seven years or less. They are not only poor and illiterate but also would include women. Thus, there is a culture of offence being inherited by many of them. As observed by this Court, it certainly exhibits the mindset, a vestige of colonial India, on the part of the investigating agency, notwithstanding the fact arrest is a draconian measure resulting in curtailment of liberty, and thus to be used sparingly. In a democracy, there can never be an impression that it is a police State as both are conceptually opposite to each other.*
>
> *Definition of trial*
>
> *7. The word "trial" is not explained and defined under the Code. An extended meaning has to be given to this word for the purpose of enlargement on bail to include, the stage of investigation and thereafter. Primary considerations would obviously be different between these two stages. In the former stage, an arrest followed by a police custody may be warranted for a thorough investigation, while in the latter what matters substantially is the proceedings before the court in the form of a trial. If we keep the above distinction in mind, the consequence to be drawn is for a more favourable consideration towards enlargement when investigation is completed, of course, among other factors.*
>
> *8. Similarly, an appeal or revision shall also be construed as a facet of trial when it comes to the consideration of bail on suspension of sentence.*
>
> *Definition of bail*
>
> *9. The term "bail" has not been defined in the Code, though is used very often. A bail is nothing but a surety inclusive of a personal bond from the accused. It means the release of an accused person either by the orders of the court or by the police or by the investigating agency.*

*10. It is a set of pre-trial restrictions imposed on a suspect while enabling any interference in the judicial process. Thus, it is a conditional release on the solemn undertaking by the suspect that he would cooperate both with the investigation and the trial. The word "bail" has been defined in Black's Law Dictionary, 9th Edn., p. 160 as:*

> *"A security such as cash or a bond; esp., security required by a court for the release of a prisoner who must appear in court at a future time."*

*11. Wharton's Law Lexicon, 14th Edn., p. 105 defines "bail" as: "to set at liberty a person arrested or imprisoned, on security being taken for his appearance on a day and at a place certain, which security is called bail, because the party arrested or imprisoned is delivered into the hands of those who bind themselves or become bail for his due appearance when required, in order that he may be safely protected from prison, to which they have, if they fear his escape, etc. the legal power to deliver him."*

***Bail is the rule***

*12. The principle that bail is the rule and jail is the exception has been well recognised through the repetitive pronouncements of this Court. This again is on the touchstone of Article 21 of the Constitution of India. This Court in Nikesh Tarachand Shah v. Union of India [Nikesh Tarachand Shah v. Union of India, (2018) 11 SCC 1 : (2018) 2 SCC (Cri) 302] , held that : (SCC pp. 22-23 & 27, paras 19 & 24)*

> *"19. In Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v. State of Punjab [Gurbaksh Singh Sibbia v. State of Punjab, (1980) 2 SCC 565 : 1980 SCC (Cri) 465] , the purpose of granting bail is set out with great felicity as follows : (SCC pp. 586-88, paras 27-30)*
>
> > *'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 Nath Chakravarti, In re [Nagendra Nath Chakravarti, In re, 1923 SCC OnLine Cal 318 : AIR 1924 Cal 476] , AIR pp. 479-80 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 [K.N. Joglekar v. Emperor, 1931 SCC OnLine All 60 : AIR 1931 All 504] 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. H.L. Hutchinson [Emperor v. H.L. Hutchinson, 1931 SCC OnLine All 14 : AIR 1931 All 356] , AIR p. 358 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 [Gudikanti Narasimhulu v. Public Prosecutor, (1978) 1 SCC 240 : 1978 SCC (Cri) 115] that : (SCC p. 242, para 1)*

> *"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 sensitised 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 Admn.) [Gurcharan Singh v. State (Delhi Admn.), (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)*

> *"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 (2nd Edn., Vol. 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.'*

* * *

*24. Article 21 is the Ark of the Covenant so far as the Fundamental Rights Chapter of the Constitution is concerned. It deals with nothing less sacrosanct than the rights of life and personal liberty of the citizens of India and other persons. It is the only article in the Fundamental Rights Chapter (along with Article 20) that cannot be suspended even in an emergency [see Article 359(1) of the Constitution]. At present, Article 21 is the repository of a vast number of substantive and procedural rights post Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India [Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, (1978) 1 SCC 248] ."*

***13.*** *Further this Court in Sanjay Chandra v. CBI [Sanjay Chandra v. CBI, (2012) 1 SCC 40 : (2012) 1 SCC (Cri) 26 : (2012) 2 SCC (L&S) 397] , has observed that : (SCC p. 52, paras 21-23)*

> *"21. In bail applications, generally, it has been laid down from the earliest times that the object of bail is to secure the appearance of the accused person at his trial by*

*reasonable amount of bail. The object of bail is neither punitive nor preventative. Deprivation of liberty must be considered a punishment, unless it is required to ensure that an accused person will stand his trial when called upon. The courts owe more than verbal respect to the principle that punishment begins after conviction, and that every man is deemed to be innocent until duly tried and duly found guilty.*

*22. From the earliest times, it was appreciated that detention in custody pending completion of trial could be a cause of great hardship. From time to time, necessity demands that some unconvicted persons should be held in custody pending trial to secure their attendance at the trial but in such cases, "necessity" is the operative test. In this country, it would be quite contrary to the concept of personal liberty enshrined in the Constitution that any person should be punished in respect of any matter, upon which, he has not been convicted or that in any circumstances, he should be deprived of his liberty upon only the belief that he will tamper with the witnesses if left at liberty, save in the most extraordinary circumstances.*

*23. Apart from the question of prevention being the object of refusal of bail, one must not lose sight of the fact that any imprisonment before conviction has a substantial punitive content and it would be improper for any court to refuse bail as a mark of disapproval of former conduct whether the accused has been convicted for it or not or to refuse bail to an unconvicted person for the purpose of giving him a taste of imprisonment as a lesson."*

***Presumption of innocence***

***14.*** *Innocence of a person accused of an offence is presumed through a legal fiction, placing the onus on the prosecution to prove the guilt before the court. Thus, it is for that agency to satisfy the court that the arrest made was warranted and enlargement on bail is to be denied.*

***15.*** *Presumption of innocence has been acknowledged throughout the world. Article 14(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 and Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 acknowledge the presumption of innocence, as a cardinal principle of law, until the individual is proven guilty."*

**11.** The Supreme Court in a landmark decision of 1978 in the case of ***Gudikanti Narasimhulu & Ors. Vs. Public Prosecutor, High Court of Andhra Pradesh***[4] observed as under**:-**

4 1978 (1) SCC 240

> *"6. Let us have a glance at the pros and cons and the true principle around which other relevant factors must revolve. When the case is finally disposed of and a person is sentenced to incarceration, things stand on a different footing. We are concerned with the penultimate stage and the* ***principal rule to guide release on bail should be to secure the presence of the applicant who seeks to be liberated, to take judgment and serve sentence in the event of the court punishing him with imprisonment.*** *In this perspective…" (emphasis supplied)*

**12.** Thereafter the Supreme Court in a plethora of judgements have discussed the rights conferred by Article 21 qua grant of bail and that such rights cannot be taken away unless the procedure is reasonable and fair and in cases where there is unreasonable delay in trial it would undoubtedly impact the rights of an undertrial.

**13.** In the landmark judgment of ***Maneka Gandhi Vs. Union of India***[5], the Supreme Court held that the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 is not limited to mere animal existence but includes the right to live with dignity. The court emphasized that the procedure established by law must be fair, just, and reasonable, and it cannot be arbitrary, oppressive, or unreasonable.

**14.** In the case of ***Hussainara Khatoon Vs. Home Secy., State of Bihar***[6] the Supreme Court held as under:-

> *"Now obviously procedure prescribed by law for depriving a person of liberty cannot "reasonable, fair or just" unless that procedure ensures a speedy trial for determination of the guilt of such person. No procedure which does not ensure a reasonably quick trial can be regarded as "reasonable, fair or just" and it would fall foul of Article 21. There can, therefore, be no doubt that speedy trial, and by speedy trial we mean reasonably expeditious trial, is an integral and essential part of the fundamental right to life and liberty enshrined in Article 21.*

5 1978 (1) SCC 248
6 (1980) 1 SCC 81

> *The question which would, however, arise is as to what would be the consequence if a person accused of an offence is denied speedy trial and is sought to be deprived of his liberty by imprisonment as a result of a long delayed trial in violation of his fundamental right under Article 21."*

**15.** The Supreme Court in the case of ***Union of India v. K. A. Najeeb***[7] while commenting upon the possibility of early completion of trial and extended incarceration held as under:-

> *"18. Adverting to the case at hand, we are conscious of the fact that the charges levelled against the respondent are grave and a serious threat to societal harmony. Had it been a case at the threshold, we would have outrightly turned down the respondent's prayer. However, keeping in mind the length of the period spent by him in custody and the unlikelihood of the trial being completed anytime soon, the High Court appears to have been left with no other option except to grant bail. An attempt has been made to strike a balance between the appellant's right to lead evidence of its choice and establish the charges beyond any doubt and simultaneously the respondent's rights guaranteed under Part III of our Constitution have been well protected."*

**16.** Petitioner in present case has been in custody for 7 years 4 months 23 days. There is no possibility of the trial concluding in the near foreseeable future. Detaining an under-trial prisoner for such an extended period further violates his fundamental right to speedy trial flowing from Article 21 of the Constitution. At this juncture I deem it appropriate to list certain observations of the Supreme Court shedding light on concerns underlying the "Right to speedy trial" from the point of view of an accused in custody whose liberty is affected. In the case of ***Abdul Rehman Antulay & Ors. Vs R.S. Nayak & Anr.***[8] the Supreme Court held as under:-

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7 Criminal Appeal No. 98 of 2021

8 1992 (1) SCC 225

> *"86. In view of the above discussion, the following propositions emerge, meant to serve as guidelines. We must forewarn that these propositions are not exhaustive. It is difficult to foresee all situations. Nor is it possible to lay down any hard and fast rules. These propositions are:*
> *(1) Fair, just and reasonable procedure implicit in Article 21 of the Constitution creates a right in the accused to be tried speedily. Right to speedy trial is the right of the accused. The fact that a speedy trial is also in public interest or that it serves the societal interest also, does not make it any-the-less the right of the accused. It is in the interest of all concerned that the guilt or innocence of the accused is determined as quickly as possible in the circumstances.*
>
> *(2) Right to Speedy Trial flowing from Article 21 encompasses all the stages, namely the stage of investigation, inquiry, trial, appeal, revision and retrial. That is how, this Court has understood this right and there is no reason to take a restricted view.*
>
> ***(3) The concerns underlying the Right to speedy trial from the point of view of the accused are:***
>
> ***(a) the period of remand and pre-conviction detention should be as short as possible. In other words, the accused should not be subjected to unnecessary or unduly long incarceration prior to his conviction;***
>
> ***(b) the worry, anxiety, expense and disturbance to his vocation and peace, resulting from an unduly prolonged investigation, inquiry or trial should be minimal; and***
>
> ***(c) undue delay may well result in impairment of the ability of the accused to defend himself, whether on account of death, disappearance or non-availability of witnesses or otherwise.***
>
> *(4) – (11) -------x-------"* *(emphasis supplied)*

**17.** The Supreme Court has also held in a series of judgments and orders that in situations where the under-trial-prisoner / accused persons have suffered incarceration rather long incarceration for a considerable period of time and there is no possibility of the trial commencing within the foreseeable future, Constitutional Courts can exercise power to release the accused under-trial on bail, as bail is the rule and jail is the exception.

**18.** In the case of ***Supreme Court Legal Aid Committee (Representing undertrial prisoners) Vs. Union of India***[9], the Supreme Court has held that:-

> *"17. We are conscious of the fact that the menace of drug trafficking has to be controlled by providing stringent punishments and those who indulge in such nefarious activities do not deserve any sympathy. But at the same time we cannot be oblivious to the fact that many innocent persons may also be languishing in jails if we recall to mind the percentage of acquittals. Since harsh punishments have been provided for under the Act, the percentage of disposals on plea of guilt is bound to be small; the State Government should, therefore, have realised the need for setting up sufficient number of Special Courts immediately after the amendment of the Act by Amendment Act 2 of 1989. Even after the Division Bench of the Bombay High Court refused to grant en bloc enlargement on bail on 1-2-1993 in Criminal Application No. 3480 of 1992 and B.D. Criminal No. 565 of 1992, no substantial improvement in the pendency is shown since new cases continue to pour in, and, therefore, a one-time exercise has become imperative to place the system on an even keel. We also recommend to the State Government to set up Review Committees headed by a Judicial Officer, preferably a retired High Court Judge, with one or two other members to review the cases of undertrials who have been in jail for long including those released under this order and to recommend to the State Government which of the cases deserve withdrawal. The State Government can then advise the Public Prosecutor to move the court for withdrawal of such cases. This will not only. help reduce the pendency but will also increase the credibility of the prosecuting agency. After giving effect to this order the Special Court may consider giving priority to cases of those undertrials who continue in jail despite this order on account of their inability to furnish bail."*

**19.** In the case of ***Avinash Ashok Torane Vs. The State of Maharashtra***[10], this Court (Coram: N.J. Jamadar, J.) while dealing with a bail application for offence under Section 302 of IPC considering parity with another co-accused who was enlarged on bail considered the unlikelihood of completion of trial coupled with the period of long incarceration of 1 year 3 months of the Applicant and enlarged him on bail.

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9 (1995) 4 SCC 695

10 Bail Application No.3535 of 2023 decided on 08.01.2024

**20.** In the case of ***Sonu Parmeshwar Jha Vs. The State of Maharashtra***[11] this Court (Coram: M.S. Karnik, J.) was dealing with a bail application for offences under Sections 302 and 304(b) of IPC and considering circumstantial evidence against the accused as well as long incarceration of accused of 1 year 7 months enlarged him on bail.

**21.** In the case of ***Santosh Ramprasad Harijan Vs. The State of Maharashtra***[12] **,** (Coram: Manish Pitale, J.) in a case under Section 302 of IPC this Court taking into account long period of incarceration undergone by accused of 3 years 4 months granted him bail.

**22.** In the case of ***Javed Gulam Nabi Shaikh Vs. State of Maharashtra and Anr.***[13], the Supreme Court while granting bail to accused incarcerated for 4 years in paragraph Nos.16 and 17 held as under:-

> *"16. Criminals are not born but made. The human potential in everyone is good and so, never write off any criminal as beyond redemption. This humanist fundamental is often missed when dealing with delinquents, juvenile and adult. Indeed, every saint has a past and every sinner a future. When a crime is committed, a variety of factors is responsible for making the offender commit the crime. Those factors may be social and economic, may be, the result of value erosion or parental neglect; may be, because of the stress of circumstances, or the manifestation of temptations in a milieu of affluence contrasted with indigence or other privations.*
> *17. If the State or any prosecuting agency including the court concerned has no wherewithal to provide or protect the fundamental right of an accused to have a speedy trial as enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution then the State or any other prosecuting agency should not oppose the plea for bail on the ground that the crime committed is serious. Article 21 of the Constitution applies irrespective of the nature of the*

11 Bail Application No.4122 of 2021 decided on 18.01.2023
12 Bail Application No.1819 of 2024 decided on 29.11.2024
13 (2024) 9 SCC 813

*crime.*

**23.** In the case of ***Balwinder Singh Vs. State of Punjab and Anr.***[14], in a case under Sections 302 and 307 of IPC the Supreme Court granted bail to the accused who was behind bars for 4 years citing unlikelihood of completion of trial in the near future as also on parity with the co-accused.

**24.** In the case of ***Roland Victor Monterio Vs. State of Maharashtra***[15], this Court (Coram: N.J. Jamadar, J.) in a case under Sections 302, 304-B and 498-A of the IPC granted bail to the accused on account of his long incarceration of 4 years. Similarly in the case of ***Naresh Harishchandra Mali Vs. The State of Maharashtra***[16], this Court (Coram: N.J. Jamadar, J.) in a case under Sections 302 and 307 of IPC granted bail to the accused as he was in prison for a period of more than 5 years.

**25.** Recently, the Delhi High Court in the case of ***Raghvendr Singh Vs. State of NCT of Delhi***[17] granted bail to the Accused who was indicted for offence of murder citing his long incarceration for a period of 5 and half years and enlarged him on bail.

**26.** The ignominy of the trial not concluding in the near foreseeable future is apparent and in view thereof on the ground of long incarceration, without delineating any opinion on merits of the

14 SLP (Crl.) No.8523 of 2024
15 Bail Application No.1981 of 2023 decided on 11.01.2024.
16 Bail Application No.3858 of 2022 decided on 27.07.2023.
17 2025 SCC Online Del 21.

matter lest it should affect the trial, Petitioner is granted bail on the ground of his long incarceration. Further considering the grievances stated and reflected in the letter which has been addressed by the Petitioner to the Court through the jail and fact that he is extremely poor and he has absolutely no person who can help him in any manner as also his case which has been espoused through the legal aid by appointing an Advocate to represent him, the Petitioner is released on bail on the following conditions:-

**(i)** Petitioner is directed to be immediately released from prison in connection with Crime No.146 of 2019;

**(ii)** Petitioner is directed to be released on bail on furnishing P.R. Bond of Rs. 5,000/- (Rs. Five Thousand only) with one or two surety / sureties of the like amount;

**(iii)** Petitioner, is ordered to be released on provisional cash bail of Rs.5,000/- (Rs. Five Thousand only) and he shall furnish one or two sureties of the like amount within a period of four weeks from the date of his release from jail;

**(iv)** Petitioner shall report to the Trial Court once every month on the first Monday of the month between 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.;

(v) Petitioner shall co-operate with the conduct of trial and attend the Trial Court on all dates, unless specifically exempted and will not take any unnecessary adjournments, if he does so it will entitle the prosecution to apply for revocation of this order;

(vi) Petitioner is directed to remain and reside outside the jurisdiction of the Police Station where the FIR in the present case has been registered until the trial is over, save and except for attending the Trial Court for hearing and his attendance and he shall not leave the State of Maharashtra without prior permission of the Trial Court;

(vii) Petitioner shall not influence any of the witnesses or tamper with the evidence in any manner and he shall not try to establish contact with the victim in any manner, physically or by any electronic means;

(viii) Petitioner shall keep the Investigating Officer informed of his current address and mobile contact number and / or change of residence or mobile details, if any, from time to time, as applicable; and

(ix) Any infraction of the conditions shall entail cancellation of bail granted to the Petitioner.

**27.** It is clarified that the observations made in this order are limited for the purpose of granting Bail only and I have not made any observations on merits of the case. The trial shall be adjudicated on the strength of the evidence led and strictly on its own merits being uninfluenced with any of the *prima facie* observations made hereinabove in this order.

**28.** This Court appreciates the assistance rendered by Ms. Pandey and Ms. Chavan, learned appointed Advocates through the legal aid. Their fees be paid by the High Court Legal Aid Services Authority as per rules on production of a server copy of this order and other compliances in accordance with the decision of this Court in the case of ***Sanjyot Nitin Telharkar v. The State of Maharashtra & Anr.***[18] and the Schedule under Regulation 18(1) of the Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority Rules, 1998.

**29.** Writ Petition is allowed and disposed of in the above terms.

H. H. SAWANT

**[ MILIND N. JADHAV, J. ]**

RAVINDRA MOHAN AMBERKAR

Digitally signed by RAVINDRA MOHAN AMBERKAR
Date: 2026.10.30 20:57:34 +0530

18 Judgement dated 25.09.2024 passed in Misc. Civil Application No.134 of 2024.