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* IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI

Reserved on: 21.08.2020 **Pronounced on:** 01.09.2020

+ BAIL APPLN. 2038/2020

DEVANGANA KALITA

..... Petitioner

Through

Mr.Kapil Sibbal, Sr. Adv. with Mr.Adit S. Pujari, Ms.Tusharika Mattoo, Mr.Kunal Negi, Ms.Kriti Awasthi & Mr.Chaitanya Sundriyal, Advs.

versus

STATE OF NCT DELHI

.... Respondent

Through

Mr.S.V. Raju, ASG with Mr.Rajat
Nair & Mr.Amit Mahajan, SPPs with
Mr.A.Venkatesh, Mr.Guntur Pramod
Kumar, Ms.Sairica Raju, Mr.Manan
Popli, Mr.Shaurya R. Rai,
Mr.Bhushan Oza, Mr.Rajeev Ranjan
& Mr.Dhruv Pande, Advs. for State.
Mr.Rajeev Krishan Sharma, SPP for
Delhi Police.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SURESH KUMAR KAIT

JUDGMENT

1. Present petition has been filed under section 439 Cr.P.C. for grant of bail to the petitioner in pursuance to FIR No. 50/2020 dated 26.02.2020 registered at Police Station Jafrabad (being investigated by Crime Branch)

for the offences punishable under sections 147/148/149/186/353/283/332/323/307/427/120B/34/188 IPC & SECTION 25, 27 Arms Act and sections 3/4 of Prevention of Destruction of Public Property Act.

- 2. Mr.S.V. Raju, learned Additional Solicitor General has submitted, while opposing the present petition, that present case pertains to the riots which occurred in the North-East District of N.C.T. of Delhi, which resulted in the tragic death of 53 innocent people. A total of 581 persons got injured out of which there were 108 police personnel who received injuries. In the said riots, 2 police personnel (1 from Delhi Police & 1 from IB) were also murdered by members of the unlawful assembly. In the said riots, out of total of 581 injured people, 97 persons received Gunshot injuries, 08 persons received Acid attack injuries, 10 persons received Burn Injuries, 340 persons got injured due to Physical assault and 126 persons got injured due to Stone pelting. The said riots resulted in registration of a total of 752 FIRs out of which 60 FIRs are being investigated by the S.I.T. (Crime Branch), 1 (one) is by Special Cell and 691 FIRs are by the local jurisdictional police.
- 3. Further submitted that the instant case i.e. FIR No. 50/2020 registered on 26.02.2020 of very serious offences under Sections 147/148/149/186/ 353/283/332/323/307/427/120B/34/188 IPC, 25/27 Arms Act and 3,4

P.D.P.P. Act. The role of petitioner has emerged as that of the main conspirator, inasmuch as, she with an intention to flare communal passion and to instigate a section of people to indulge in rioting, did all the preparatory work such as organising and mobilisation of crowd, sustaining the mobilised mob of a particular community at the protest site, and thereafter, to instigate them to commit the offences as enumerated above. Moreover, the petitioner is involved in other cases, the details of the same are as under:-

- (a) FIR No. 48/20, U/s 147/186/353/188/283/109/341/34 IPC of P.S. Jafrbad, Delhi;
- (b) FIR No. 250/19, U/s 147/148/149/153-A(II)/436/437/323/325/353 /186/188/120B/34 IPC & 3 PDPP Act, P.S. Darya Ganj, Delhi;
- (c) FIR No. 59/20, U/s 120B r/w
 124A/302/307/353/186/212/395/427/436/452/454/114/147/
 148/149/153A/34 IPC, 3/4 PDPP Act, 25/27 Arms Act &
 17/18 UA (P) Act, P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi.
- 4. It is submitted that she was physically present at the spot, i.e. site at

66 Foota Road, under Jafrabad Metro Station, Delhi since beginning i.e. at about 9:00 PM on 22.02.2020 till the final dispersal of the violent crowd on late evening i.e. at about 7:00 PM on 25.02.2020. The petitioner was also part of the violent crowd when the present incident dated 25.02.2020 occurred, where the crowd organised, mobilised and instigated by her with a common intention, fired gunshots and pelted stones, bottles, carrets etc. on the police personnel on duty who, as a result of the criminal force applied by her, sustained grievous injuries.

5. In addition, Mr.Raju has submitted that on 24.02.2020, when protestor namely Sharukh Pathan came out, with a pistol, from the protest site where the petitioner was leading protest and fired several rounds and also aimed on police officials. Accordingly, he was arrested in case FIR No. 51/20, P.S. Jafrabad, Delhi and his bail application was dismissed by this Court. The video clips of the protest on 05.01.2020 and 23.02.2020 have been seized. The video clips of 05.01.2020 shows her speech against C.A.A./N.R.C. and her initial speech for mobilization and instigation for the protest. The video link of twitter also shows presence of the petitioner at the spot on 23.02.2020 and also the request for mobilization due to the heavy police deployment. The mobile phone connectivity chart of the petitioner proves

that she was in regular touch with the rioters/conspirators of the protests/riot in different location of North-East Delhi.

- 6. Moreover, learned ASG submitted that the petitioner is not entitled for bail keeping in view the gravity of offence, danger of absconding that she is resident of Assam and her husband is resident of United Kingdom. In addition, facts showing likelihood of the offence being repeated, if the petitioner is released on bail and may also influence the prosecution witnesses. She is, admittedly, key member of "*Pinjratod*" group and said group continuously running sustained media campaign against the investigating agency on social media and other news portals to obfuscate and discrete the process of law instituted against her.
- 7. To strengthen his arguments, Mr.Raju, learned ASG has relied upon following cases:
 - i. State of U.P. vs. Amarmani Tripathi: (2005) 8 SCC 21;
 - ii. The State of Orissa vs. Mahimananda Mishra on 18.09.2018 Criminal Appeal No.1175/2018;
 - iii. Lalji vs. State of U.P.: (1989) 1 SCC 437: 1989 SCC (Cri)
 211 at page 440;

- iv. Munivel vs. State of Tamil Nadu: (2006) 9 SCC 394: (2006)2 SCC (Cri) 581 at page 405;
- v. Bhawar Singh & Ors. vs. State of Madhya Pradesh: (2008)
 16 SCC 657;
- vi. State of Rajasthan vs. Nathu: (2003) 5 SCC 537: 2003 SCC (Cri) 1156 at page 541;
- vii. Ajay Malhotra & Anr. vs. State Govt. of Delhi: 2014 SCC OnLine Del 4500.
- 8. Learned ASG submitted that considering the gravity of the offence and its effect on the society, none of the accused in the present F.I.R. have been granted bail, thus, present petition deserves to be dismissed.
- 9. Mr.Kapil Sibbal, learned senior counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioner submitted that the petitioner is entitled to bail on account of the fact interalia that there would be no useful purpose served in permitting continued custody of the petitioner, who was arrested on 24.05.2020, in respect of an incident on 25.04.2020, and particularly when no material has been placed on record by the investigating agency that would indicate any attempt by the petitioner to either flee from justice or tamper with evidence

or influence witnesses. The gravity of the offence, i.e. Section 302 IPC, or even the other offences, are ex facie not made out in respect of the petitioner, and the best evidence in relation to the alleged riot in question, being photos and videos which nowhere indicate that the petitioner was near the alleged incident. Moreover, there is no material that links the petitioner to the incident being investigated, i.e. the death due to gunshot injury of Aaman, s/o Iqbal Ahmad. The petitioner has no relation to the alleged incident on 25.02.2020, which as per the investigating agency was recorded by a videographer, however, has been arraigned as a conspirator in the subject FIR.

- 10. Learned senior counsel further submitted that the petitioner is already being investigated for the alleged larger conspiracy behind the Delhi Riots in FIR 59/2020 dated 06.03.2020 PS Crime Branch Special Unit, and it is settled law that multiple FIRs in relation to the same incident cannot be registered and the entire incident appears to be the product of a one-sided investigation, in which the investigating agency has demonstrably made false submissions in writing at the time of opposing bail to the petitioner.
- 11. A brief list of dates and events as stated in the present petition are as under:

26.02.2020	FIR 50/2020 PS Jafrabad dated 26.02.2020 came to be registered under Sections 147/148/149/186/353/283/332/323/307/427/120B/34/188 IPC read with Section 25/27 Arms Act read with Section 34 of the PDPP Act, in respect of an alleged incident on 25.02.2020. The said FIR mentions the existence of FIR No. 48/2020 PS Jafrabad in which the Applicant has got bail.
05.03.2020	An alleged disclosure statement of one Shahrukh came to be recorded in the subject FIR 50/2020 on 05.03.2020. The Applicant is not named in the said Disclosure statement, which in any event, ought to be viewed with circumspect, but the said disclosure statement was ostensibly the reason for arrest of the Applicant on 24.05.2020.
21.05.2020	The Applicant was visited at her house by the investigating agency from PS Crime Branch on 21.05.2020 when a notice was served on the Applicant to join investigation. Such officials told the Applicant that they would be visiting her at her home on 23.05.2020 at 3:00 pm for such purposes.
23.05.2020	On 23.05.2020, three male police officers and one female police officer from PS Special Unit visited the home of the Applicant. She was interrogated for close to two hours. Suddenly, around 5.15 pm (when she was serving tea to the persons who had interrogated her), there was a switch of persons from the investigating agency, and officers from PS Jafrabad entered the Applicant's home, and without providing grounds of arrest, or even a copy of the FIR, the Applicant was arrested at 5.30 p.m.
24.05.2020	The Applicant was produced before the Ld. Duty Magistrate at Mandoli Jail. The Applicant came to be released on bail in FIR No. 48/2020 with observations that the "accused were merely protesting against the

	NRC and CAA and accused did not indulge in any violence" (sic). Further, the Ld. Duty Magistrate observed that the Applicant/Accused Persons ought to be granted bail in view of the Covid-19 Epidemic, and the fact that the Accused Persons have strong roots in society. Curiously, while orders were being dictated for grant of bail in FIR 48/2020 at P.S. Jafrabad, the investigating agency appeared and sought arrest and Police Custody of the Accused in FIR No. 50/2020. The Ld. Magistrate, Mandoli Jail disallowed the request for 14 days Police Custody, and granted the Investigating Agency 2 days Police Custody of the Accused Persons in FIR 50/2020 at P.S. Jafrabad.
26.05.2020	The Applicant came to be produced before the Ld. Duty Magistrate at Mandoli Jail where the remand of the Applicant to Police Custody was extended by a period of two days, without even providing the Applicant with a copy of the Remand Application or the Remand Order.
28.05.2020	The Applicant came to be produced before the Ld. Duty Magistrate at Mandoli Jail where Applicant was remanded to Judicial Custody for a period of 14 days in the present case i.e. FIR NO. 50/2020 at P.S. Jafrabad (now investigated by Crime Branch) dated 26.02.2020.
29.05.2020	Before the Ld. Duty Magistrate at Tihar Jail, the Investigating Agency in FIR 250/2019, registered at PS Darya Ganj (now being investigated by the crime branch) sought permission to interrogate the Applicant.
30.05.2020	The Investigating Agency in FIR 250/2019 moved an application seeking 04 days Police Custody ("PC") of the Applicant before the Ld. Duty Magistrate, Tihar Jail, and 03 days PC came to be granted to the Investigating Officer by the Ld. Duty Magistrate till

	02.06.2020.
02.06.2020	The Applicant was produced before the Ld. Duty Magistrate at Tihar Jail, and despite request of the investigating Agency to Judicial Custody remand, the Applicant came to be granted bail in FIR No. 250/2020.
02.06.2020	The Investigating Agency in FIR 50/2020 P.S. Jafrabad filed a chargesheet in the said case, a copy of which was not supplied to the Applicant.
04.06.2020	The Applicant herein filed an Application before the Ld. Duty Magistrate, Karkardooma Courts seeking a copy of the chargesheet in the present case. It is pertinent to note that the Investigating Agency filed a Reply to such Application where an entirely false and mala-fide manner has stated that "on 02.06.2020, the first charge sheet was filed against 10 accused persons who were arrested earlier. The charge sheet against the applicant/accused has not been filed yet. As and when the charge sheet against the applicant will be filed the copy of the same will be provided to the applicant/accused "(sic).
06.06.2020	Vide Order dated 06.06.2020, the Ld. Duty Magistrate, Karkardooma Courts directed the Investigating Officer in the present case to supply a copy of the Police Report to counsel for the Applicant positively within four days.
08.06.2020	The Applicant was supplied a copy of the chargesheet at which the entirely false statement of the investigating agency that the chargesheet against the Applicant was not filed came to light. On such date, by way of the order of the Ld. Special Judge, Patiala House Courts, the Applicant also came to be sent to Judicial Custody in FIR No. 59/2020 at P.S. Crime Branch dated 06.03.2020 till 25.06.2020.

11.06.2020	On 11.06.2020 14 days JC remand of the Applicant as directed vide Order dated 28.05.2020 came to end. However, at the time of alleged extension of JC Remand of the Applicant, the Applicant was neither supplied with a copy of the Application seeking extension of remand nor physically presented (or through Videoconference ("VC")) before the Ld. Magistrate extending JC Remand of the Applicant.
15.06.2020	Notice was issued on the Application of the Applicant before the Ld. Additional Sessions Judge, Shahdara, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi ("Ld.ASJ") under Section 439 Cr.P.C.
19.06.2020	During the pendency of the Application under Section 439 CrPC before the Ld. ASJ a report was sent by the Dy. Superintendent which in an entirely false manner indicated that the Applicant had not been produced as she was quarantined, and the remand accordingly came to be extended by the Ld. Duty Magistrate, Ms. Nupur Gupta, MM-II, South-East District, Saket Court.
25.06.2020	The JC remand of the Applicant came to an end, and on the counsel for the Applicant indicating that the Applicant had been produced in another FIR, the Ld. Duty MM, South-East, Saket, Sh. Dev Chaudhary directed that the Applicant be produced.
26.06.2020	JC Remand of the Applicant was mechanically extended by another period of 14 days, without presence of counsel despite specific requests.
02.07.2020	The Application seeking directions in terms of the illegal remand of the Applicant by way of order dated 26.06.2020 came to be listed before the Ld.CMM, Shahdara, Karkardooma Courts, wherein explicit directions were passed to ensure that the counsels for the Applicant be contacted at the time of remand, and the details of the Counsels of the Applicant came to be

	recorded in such order, and the Application was sent back to the concerned Ld.MM for adjudication.
06.07.2020	The Ld.MM, Shahdara, Karkardooma Courts, Sh. Fahad Uddin directed the Ld. IO be present on 10.07.2020 along with the case diary at the hearing concerning the JC remand of the Accused, as well as apprise the concerned court of the order of the Ld.CMM dated 02.07.2020, in order to ensure that the Applicant's fundamental right to represented by counsel of her choice is not violated.
09.07.2020	The Applicant came to inadvertently produced before a court, the details of which are not known to the Applicant. At such time the Applicant indicated that the JC Remand of the Applicant was till 10.07.2020, and requested her counsel be contacted. However, when the Counsel for the Applicant contacted the jail authorities, such Counsel was informed that the hearing had already taken place, and the Applicant would be produced on 10.07.2020.
10.07.2020	JC Remand was once again mechanically extended by a period of 14 days, without counsel being sent video links for such extension, despite multiple requests in this regard.
14.07.2020	The Application under Section 439 CrPC before the Ld. ASJ came to be rejected on the ground that a statement of a protected witness points to the "active role and conspiracy of the accused/ applicant and in causing the riots". It is pertinent to note that on 02.07.2020, the Ld.IO while presenting such statement of the protected witness indicated that such statement had come to the knowledge of the investigating agency by the investigating agency in FIR No.59/2020. The Ld. ASJ without considering the triple test laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in P.Chidambram v Directorate of Enforcement (Criminal Appeal No.

1831/2019 decided on 04.12.2019. has further held that "considering the investigation so far and the nature of the offence and the role being ascribed to the applicant/accused. I see no reason at all to grant bail to the applicant/accused..".

12. Accordingly, it is submitted, while relying upon the case of *Shambir* & Ors. vs. State: 254(2018) DLT 488, that the petitioner from a very early age, excelled at academics, and is enrolled as a student in the MPhil-Ph.D. Programme in the Department of Women's Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. She is a person with a demonstrably deep academic record, having, throughout her career received multiple accolades on this account. She has been part of several peaceful campaigns for removal of discriminatory hostel curfew timings and rules, establishment of Internal Complaints Committee against Sexual Harassment on campuses as per Guidelines, providing affordable dignified university Vishaka and accommodation for women, implementation of reservation, demand for scholarships etc. She has during her academic career been actively involved with women's issues. In fact, MA thesis of the petitioner, where she topped her batch, was on the condition and struggles of women tea plantation workers in Assam. She is MA with Distinction in Gender and Development that had done from Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex,

UK. During her MA, she was also a Student Ambassador for University of Sussex, where she worked with the Aim Higher and SEAS Programme of the University to motivate young people from socially, economically, and racially marginalised backgrounds in UK to pursue higher education. Thereafter, she worked in the United Kingdom as a Research Assistant with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) on various projects involving gender issues. She obtained a degree in BA(Hon) English from Miranda House College from 2007-10, University of Delhi, which she completed with First Division and was amongst the top 20 rank holders in the university. During her college life, she has been the Vice President of the Miranda House Students Union, President of the Debating Society, an active member of the Fine Arts and Literary Society of said college and a recipient of the Miranda House Silver Jubilee Award. She has participated in international debating tournaments and Model United Nation proceedings in Cambridge University, London School of Economics, SOAS etc. Moreover, in 2009, she was a Runner Up Recipient of the Young India Visionary Award organised by India Habitat Centre for her essay on "India's Youth Energy – Power and Potential". She has always been known as a peaceloving individual, and her contribution to such peaceable campaigns for

equal rights of the marginalized has been recognized, despite her young age.

Thus, the present petition may be allowed.

- 13. I have heard learned counsel for the parties and perused the material available on record and filed in a sealed cover along with pen drive by the respondent.
- 14. Admittedly, an alleged disclosure statement of one Shahrukh came to be recorded in the subject FIR 50/2020 on 05.03.2020, however, petitioner is not named in the said disclosure statement. On 06.03.2020, another FIR bearing number 59/2020 under Section 120B/124A/302/307/353/186/212/395/487/435/436/452/109/114/147/148/124A/153A/34 IPC and U/s 25& 26 Arms Act, 1959 registered at Crime Branch (which is now being investigated by Special Cell) regarding certain offences allegedly committed by the certain persons named in the FIR during the riots which took place in Delhi in February 2020. The petitioner has not been named in such FIR. However, the Investigating Agency in FIR 59/2020 seized the phone of the petitioner on 19.04.2020, and she disclosed the password of said phone.
- 15. The petitioner satisfies the triple test upheld in the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in *P Chidambaram vs. Director of Enforcement*

(Criminal Appeal No 1831/2019) dated 04.12.2019 in the manner that the petitioner herein was arrested without even a notice under Section 41A of the Cr.P.C. Moreover, she remained available at her home on 23.05.2020, and even provided her phone to the Respondent previously, as well as joined investigation. Evidently, she did not try to evade arrest or even file for anticipatory bail because she had no reason to believe that she ought to be in custody. The petitioner is a student pursuing her higher education and sufficient standing in society without any possibility of fleeing from justice.

- 16. Regarding tampering with Evidence that the evidence in relation to the participation of the petitioner in the protests in question, are available with the Investigating Agency, and there is no documentation/evidence of any other nature in her possession.
- 17. Regarding third test i.e. influencing witnesses are concerned, the petitioner is not in position to influence witnesses in the FIR, which in any event appears to relate to public servants/ police officials, and in any case she came to be arrested almost three months after the registration of the FIR.
- 18. It is settled law that the purpose of incarceration during trial is not

punitive, and incarceration is to be limited to cases where it is absolutely essential. Reliance in this regard may be placed on the decision of this Court in *Ashok Sagar vs. State (NCT of Delhi): 2018 VIAD (Delhi) 21*, the relevant extracts of which are hereunder:

- "35. Authorities on bail, and the jurisprudence relating thereto, are in overabundance, and it is hardly necessary to multiply references thereto. The principles governing exercise of judicial discretion in such cases, appear, however, to be well-settled. The following principles may immediately be discerned, from the aforementioned authorities:
 - (i) Incarceration, during trial, is not punitive, but to secure the presence of the accused. The approach of the court, in examining applications for bail, which seek release of the accused during trial, has, therefore, necessarily to centre around the issue of whether continued incarceration of the accused is necessary and imperative, towards securing the end of obtaining his presence when required. Incarceration during trial, therefore, neither chastises nor cures.
 - (ii) While examining the issue, courts are not to presume that the accused would flee justice, were he to be released, and search for evidence indicating to the contrary. Logistically, every accused, who is released during trial, has the potentiality of fleeing. Were this potentiality to be allowed to influence the mind of the court, no accused would be entitled to bail.
 - (iii) While examining applications for bail, the

court has to be duly sensitized to the mandate of Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees freedom to every citizen of India save and except by procedure prescribed by law. Curtailment of personal liberty during therefore, to be limited to those trial, has, cases in which it is absolutely essential, and in which, in the absence of such curtailment, the process of trial is likely to be hampered by the accused, whether by vanishing or by unduly influencing the trial process, by intimidating the witnesses, or otherwise. If no such apprehension can legitimately be expressed, there can be no reasonable ground to keep the accused incarcerated, as incarceration would then assume a punitive avatar...."

[Emphasis supplied]

- 19. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has consistently held that bail is the rule and detention is the exception, and refusal of bail is a restriction on the personal liberty of an individual guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. Personal liberty is the most important fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution. Furthermore, it is the fundamental principle of criminal jurisprudence that every individual is presumed to be innocent till he or she is found guilty.
- 20. In my considered opinion, no prejudice would be caused to the Respondent's investigation by grant of relief to the petitioner, and she would be prevented from suffering further unnecessary harassment, humiliation,

and unjustified detention. Moreover, persons similarly placed as the petitioner, as per documents placed on record by the investigating agency, have not been arrested by the investigating agency in the subject FIR, and as such, the continued custody of the petitioner in the subject FIR would serve no purpose.

21. In addition to above, chargesheet has already been filed against the petitioner on 02.06.2020. Moreover, I have gone through the inner case diary produced in a sealed cover along with pen drive and found that though her presence is seen in peaceful agitation, which is fundamental right guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution of India, however, failed to produce any material that she in her speech instigated women of particular community or gave hatred speech due to which precious life of a young man has been sacrificed and property damaged. Admittedly, agitation was going on since long, print and electronic media was present throughout in addition to cameras of police department, but there is no such evidence which establishes that the alleged offence has taken place on the act done by the petitioner, except statements recorded under section 164 Cr.P.C. much belatedly, though, those witnesses were allegedly remain present at the spot throughout.

- 22. It is pertinent to mention here that as per the Inner Case Diary (produced in sealed cover), statements of witnesses (identity withheld) were recorded much belated on 30.06.2020, 03.07.2020 and 08.07.2020 including statements recorded under section 164 Cr.P.C. on 08.07.2020, whereas that witness is claimed to be present throughout, since December, 2019 when the agitation initially started against CAA.
- 23. In view of above facts, I find no substance in arguments of learned ASG and cases relied upon are no help in the facts and circumstances of the present case. Thus, without commenting on the merits of the prosecution case, petitioner deserves bail.
- 24. Accordingly, she shall be released on bail on her furnishing a personal bond of Rs.25,000/- with one surety of the like amount to the satisfaction of Trial Court, if not required in any other case.
- 25. Petitioner shall not directly or indirectly influence any witness or tamper with the evidence.
- 26. Petitioner shall not leave country without permission of the Trial Court.
- 27. The Trial Court shall not get influenced by the observation made by

this Court while passing the order in the present petition.

- 28. The petition is, accordingly, allowed and disposed of.
- 29. Pending application, if any, stands disposed of.
- 30. Copy of this order be transmitted to the Jail Superintendent concerned and Trial Court for information and necessary compliance.
- 31. The order be uploaded on the website forthwith.

(SURESH KUMAR KAIT) JUDGE

SEPTEMBER 01, 2020 ab

