

Smt Laxmi Singh And Another vs State Of Up And 2 Others on 1 April, 2025

Author: Mahesh Chandra Tripathi

Bench: Mahesh Chandra Tripathi

HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD

?Neutral Citation No. - 2025:AHC:44231-DB

Court No. - 42

Case :- CRIMINAL MISC. WRIT PETITION No. - 5986 of 2025

Petitioner :- Smt Laxmi Singh And Another

Respondent :- State Of Up And 2 Others

Counsel for Petitioner :- Rishi Kumar Dwivedi, Surendra Kumar Mishra

Counsel for Respondent :- G.A.

Hon'ble Mahesh Chandra Tripathi, J.

Hon'ble Prashant Kumar, J.

1. Heard learned counsel for the petitioners and learned A.G.A. for the State-respondents.
2. The present writ petition has been preferred with the prayer to quash the impugned First Information Report dated 14.03.2025, registered as Case Crime No. 0068 of 2025 under Section 87 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at Police Station Sumerpur, District Hamirpur and with a further prayer not to arrest the petitioners in pursuance of the impugned F.I.R.

3. The impugned FIR was lodged by the informant on 14.03.2025, alleging that on 01.03.2025, his sister (petitioner no. 1), aged about 18 years, was enticed away by an unknown person from their residence.

4. The learned counsel for the petitioners submits that the petitioners, a married couple, are both major and entered into wedlock willingly on 06.03.2025 at Arya Samaj, Fatehpur, as evidenced by their marriage affidavit and photographs (Annexure-4). Age of petitioner no. 1 is corroborated by her High School mark sheet and Aadhaar card (Annexure-2), while age of petitioner no. 2 is verified by his Aadhaar and PAN card (Annexure-3). It is argued that the FIR is baseless, as petitioner no.1 was neither abducted nor coerced, and the marriage is legally valid. The learned counsel further asserts that the police are harassing the petitioners by repeatedly visiting their residence under the guise of investigation, despite the absence of any criminal intent. The petitioners seek protection of their fundamental rights under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, urging the Court to stay their arrest and quash the FIR to prevent abuse of the legal process.

5. Learned counsel for the petitioners has further contended that in view of the aforesaid facts and circumstances, the impugned FIR is liable to be quashed in view of the Supreme Court's judgment in Kavita Chandrakant Lakhani vs. State of Maharashtra & Anr reported in AIR 2018 SC 2099, wherein it was held that to constitute an offence under Section 366 IPC (now Section 87, BNS, 2023), it is necessary for the prosecution to prove that the accused induced the complainant woman or compelled by force to go from any place, that such inducement was by deceitful means, that such abduction took place with the intent that the complainant may be seduced to illicit intercourse and/or that the accused knew it to be likely that the complainant may be seduced to illicit intercourse as a result of her abduction. Mere abduction does not bring an accused under the ambit of this penal section. So far as charge under Section 366 IPC is concerned, mere finding that a woman was abducted is not enough, it must further be proved that the accused abducted the woman with the intent that she may be compelled, or knowing it to be likely that she will be compelled to marry any person or in order that she may be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse or knowing it to be likely that she will be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse. Unless the prosecution proves that the abduction is for the purposes mentioned in Section 366 IPC, the Court cannot hold the accused guilty and punish him under Section 366 IPC.

6. Reliance has also been placed on a judgement and order dated 5.12.2022 passed by a Coordinate Bench of this Court in Criminal Misc. Writ Petition No. 17046 of 2022 (Smt. Juli Kumari and another vs. State of UP and 2 others), wherein under identical circumstances, the petition was allowed and FIR therein was quashed. For ready reference the order dated 5.12.2022 is quoted as under:

"Heard learned counsel for the petitioners and learned AGA.

Present writ petition has been preferred for quashing the FIR dated 25.10.2022 being Case Crime No.0475 of 2022 under Section 366 IPC, P.S. Saurikh, Distt. Kannauj and for a direction to respondents not to arrest the petitioners pursuant to aforesaid FIR.

Placing reliance on the Aadhar Card of the victim girl showing her date of birth as 1.1.2004, it is submitted by the learned counsel for the petitioners that the petitioner no.1 is a major girl aged about more than 18 years on the date of incident.

The present petition has been filed with the declaration, jointly by both the petitioners no.1 & 2 that the petitioner no.1 had left her paternal home out of her own sweet will and being a major girl, she is free to take her choice to perform marriage with the petitioner no.2.

The present petition, however, has been filed on the assertion that no offence under Section 366 IPC is made out as the petitioner no.1 is a major girl. The entire criminal case lodged by the respondent no.3 is nothing but an abuse of the process of the law.

Learned counsel for the petitioners has further contended that in view of the aforesaid facts and circumstances, the impugned FIR is liable to be quashed in view of the Supreme Court's judgment in Kavita Chandrakant Lakhani vs. State of Maharashtra & Anr reported in AIR 2018 SC 2099, wherein it was held that to constitute an offence under Section 366 IPC, it is necessary for the prosecution to prove that the accused induced the complainant woman or compelled by force to go from any place, that such inducement was by deceitful means, that such abduction took place with the intent that the complainant may be seduced to illicit intercourse and/or that the accused knew it to be likely that the complainant may be seduced to illicit intercourse as a result of her abduction. Mere abduction does not bring an accused under the ambit of this penal section. So far as charge under Section 366 IPC is concerned, mere finding that a woman was abducted is not enough, it must further be proved that the accused abducted the woman with the intent that she may be compelled, or knowing it to be likely that she will be compelled to marry any person or in order that she may be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse or knowing it to be likely that she will be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse. Unless the prosecution proves that the abduction is for the purposes mentioned in Section 366 IPC, the Court cannot hold the accused guilty and punish him under Section 366 IPC.

As regards the age of the victim girl, as indicated in the Aadhar Card appended as Annexure No.2 to the writ petition, no dispute has been raised by learned AGA. It is, thus, clear that both the petitioners are major. The fact that the present writ petition has been filed with the declaration by the victim girl and that she is living voluntarily in the company of the petitioner no.2, is supported with the signature of the victim girl on the Vakalatnama. Once the age of the victim girl is not in dispute, the petitioners no.1 & 2 cannot be made accused for committing offence under Section 366 IPC as victim had left her home in order to live with the petitioner no.2.

We make it clear that the question in the present petition is not about the validity of marriage of two individuals i.e. petitioners no.1 & 2. Rather, the issue is about the life and liberty of two individuals in choosing a partner or their right to freedom of choice

as to with whom they would like to live.

In view of the above discussion, we are of the considered view that from the first information report no offence under Section 366 IPC is made out, inasmuch as, both the petitioners are major and the petitioner no.1 has come up with the categorical stand that she had left her home with the petitioner no.2 willingly and is living with him as a married woman.

In view of the above, the writ petition succeeds and is allowed. The FIR dated 25.10.2022 being Case Crime No.0475 of 2022 under Section 366 IPC, P.S. Saurikh, Distt. Kannauj as well as all consequential proceedings are hereby quashed.

We, however, clarify that while deciding the present petition, we have not looked into the validity of marriage of the petitioners."

7. Learned A.G.A., on the instructions, states that till date the police report has not been submitted in the present matter. He has submitted that once the petitioner No.1, who is major and admitted herself that she has already solemnized marriage with the petitioner, he has no objection, if the matter is decided on merit.

8. We have proceeded to examine the record in question and find that once the age of the petitioner No.1 is not in dispute and she herself states that she has married the petitioner No.2 out of her own free will, then the petitioners cannot be made accused for committing offence under Section 87, BNS, 2023 as the petitioner No.1 had left her home in order to live with the petitioner No.2. Considering the fact that the date of birth of the petitioner No.1 is not in dispute and there is also a joint affidavit, we find that in spite of the time accorded to learned AGA, till date no objection has been filed nor any chargesheet has been forwarded to the competent court in the instant matter, the impugned FIR is liable to be quashed.

9. In view of the above discussion, we are of the considered view that from the first information report no offence under Section 87, BNS, 2023 is made out, inasmuch as the petitioner No.1 has come up with the categorical stand that she had left her home with the petitioner willingly and is living with him as a married woman.

10. In view of the above, the writ petition succeeds and is allowed. Consequently, the First Information Report dated 14.03.2025, registered as Case Crime No. 0068 of 2025 under Section 87 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at Police Station Sumerpur, District Hamirpur as well as all consequential proceedings are hereby quashed.

11. We further clarify that the observations made qua the marriage is only for disposal of instant matter and would have no bearing qua their respective rights and the same is to be pressed before the competent court/ authority.

Order Date :- 1.4.2025 NLY (Prashant Kumar,J.) (Mahesh Chandra Tripathi,J.)