

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT PATNA

Civil Writ Jurisdiction Case No. 19471 of 2025

Rajeev Kumar (Male), Son of Vijay Pandey, Resident of Village Manjhauli,
P.S. Wazirganj, District - Gaya.

... .. Petitioner/s

Versus

1. The State of Bihar the Principal Secretary Department of Excise,
Government of Bihar, Patna.
2. The District Magistrate cum Collector, Gaya.
3. The Assistant Commissioner Prohibition, Gaya.
4. The Superintendent of Police, District- Gaya.
5. The S.H.O., Wazirganj P.S., District- Gaya.
6. The S.H.O., Sindhugarh P.S., District- Gaya.

... .. Respondent/s

Appearance:

For the Petitioner/s : Mr. Indu Shekhar Dwivedi, Advocate
For the State Respondent : Mr. Mujtabaul Haque, GP 12
Mr. Pranoy Kumar, AC to GP 12

CORAM: HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE MOHIT KUMAR SHAH

and

HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ARUN KUMAR JHA

ORAL JUDGMENT

(Per: HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE MOHIT KUMAR SHAH)

Date: 07-04-2026

The present writ petition has been filed for quashing the order dated 07.02.2025 passed in Excise Confiscation Case No.656 of 2024 by the learned Assistant Commissioner, Prohibition, Gaya whereby and whereunder the Splendor motorcycle of the petitioner bearing registration No. BR26S-7652, Chassis No. MBLHAW110LHG10130, Engine No.



HA11EVLHG10049 has been directed to be confiscated in connection with Sindhugarh P.S. Case No.14 of 2024.

2. The brief facts of the case, according to the petitioner are that his motorcycle bearing registration No. BR26S-7652 was snatched on 05.12.2023 by two unknown miscreants leading to the petitioner having filed an FIR bearing Wazirganj P.S. Case No. 723 of 2023 dated 06.12.2023 under Section 394 of the Indian Penal Code. It appears that subsequently the police force, while on patrolling duty as also while they were checking vehicles, had apprehended four motorcycles carrying 150 liters of illicit liquor each in sacks and during the course thereof one of the motorcycles bearing same chassis number and engine number as that of the motorcycle of the petitioner was also seized. This led to lodging of an FIR bearing Sindhugarh P.S. Case No.14 of 2024 dated 30.03.2024, registered under Section 30(a) of the Bihar Prohibition and Excise (Amendment) Act, 2018 (hereinafter referred to as the 'Act, 2018'), whereafter confiscation proceedings were initiated *vide* Excise Confiscation Case No.656 of 2024 and ultimately the learned Court of Assistant Commissioner, Prohibition, Gaya passed an order dated 07.02.2025 confiscating the aforesaid vehicle of the petitioner.



3. The learned counsel for the petitioner has submitted that since the motorcycle of the petitioner had been stolen much earlier than the day the same was seized by the police in connection with excise case as also the name of the petitioner does not find place in the FIR bearing Sindhugarh P.S. Case No.14 of 2024 lodged U/s. 30(a) of the Bihar Prohibition & Excise (Amendment) Act, 2018, it cannot be said that either there was consent of the petitioner or connivance of the owner of the motorcycle in question *i.e.* the petitioner in commission of the offence.

4. It is further submitted that the records would bear it out that the involvement of the petitioner in the illegal use of the motorcycle in question, for ferrying the illicit liquor has also not been proved. Thus, it is submitted by relying on a judgment dated 30.01.2024, passed by a Co-ordinate Bench of this Court in the case of *Sunaina vs. State of Bihar & Ors.*, reported in **2024 SCC Online Pat 851** and the one dated 18.11.2025, passed in the case of *Ali Ashraf Siddique vs. The State of Bihar & Ors.* (CWJC No.16421 of 2025) that if the involvement of the owner of the vehicle is not there in commission of the alleged offence of transporting of illicit liquor and any such illegal use of the vehicle, the vehicle cannot be subjected to a confiscation proceeding.



5. *Per contra*, the learned counsel for the respondents has vehemently opposed the prayer of the petitioner for quashing of the order dated 07.02.2025, however he has not been able to deny the fact that the motorcycle in question was stolen/snatched much before it was seized in connection with the Excise Act case. The learned counsel for the respondent-State has also not been able to show any proof of involvement of the petitioner in the occurrence of recovery of 150 liters of illicit liquor from the motorcycle in question and moreover, in the counter affidavit filed in the present case, there is no material to show any direct or indirect involvement of the petitioner/owner of the vehicle in commission of the alleged offence.

6. We have heard the learned counsel for the parties and perused the materials on record from which it is apparent that the petitioner had filed an FIR bearing Wazirganj P.S. Case No. 723 of 2023 dated 06.12.2023 under Section 394 of the Indian Penal Code in connection with theft of his motorcycle bearing registration No. BR26S-7652, however the police could not trace out the same but after about four months, the said motorcycle was seized in connection with Sindhugarh P.S. Case No.14 of 2024 dated 30.03.2024 under Section 30(a) of the Act, 2018 on account of recovery of 150 liters of illicit liquor and the person arrested



from the spot, who was driving the said motorcycle, is also in no way connected to the petitioner as is apparent from the records. We further find from the counter affidavit filed by the respondent-State that no proof has been brought on record regarding the involvement of the petitioner in the alleged crime much less him having any connivance in the alleged occurrence. The learned counsel for the respondents has not refuted the fact that the FIR filed by the petitioner in connection with the theft of his motorcycle is authentic and lawful.

7. At this juncture, we would gainfully refer to the law laid down by a co-ordinate Bench of this Court in the case of **Sunaina** (Supra), relevant paragraphs whereof being para nos. 20 to 30 are reproduced herein below:-

“20. The first and foremost thing, which emerges from the aforesaid discussion of the statutory provisions, is that no vehicle can be seized or confiscated without its use in commission of any offence under the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016. Under Section 30 of the Act, transport of illicit liquor or intoxicant is an offence and in commission of such offence, a vehicle can be used. As such, use of the vehicle in transport of illicit liquor/ intoxicant is sine qua non for its seizure and confiscation. It also emerges that just use of the vehicle to carry intoxicant or liquor is also not sufficient for its seizure and confiscation. The involvement or connivance of the owner of the vehicle in such illegal use of the vehicle is also an essential prerequisite for confiscation of the vehicle or imposing any penalty for release of the vehicle. Such view has been



consistently expressed by this Court in various judicial pronouncements under writ jurisdiction.

21. It has been held by this Court in Mohammad Basim Akram v. State of Bihar [2022 (6) BLJ 540] that when the driver of a vehicle is found to be carrying some quantity of intoxicant or liquor in the vehicle for his personal consumption without any knowledge of the owner of the vehicle, such vehicle cannot be construed of having indulged in transportation of illicit liquor. The facts of the case was that 8.8 litre illicit liquor was recovered from the cabin of the driver and driver had confessed that he had purchased the contraband for his personal consumption and kept in the cabin.

*22. There is also a possibility of situation where driver of a motorcycle or car or other vehicles may be carrying small quantity of contraband in his clothes like in pocket of shirt or pant. In such situation also, it would be completely erroneous to hold that vehicle was being used for carrying the contraband. Hon'ble High Court of Kerala in Wilson C.C. v. State of Kerala [2022 LiveLaw (Ker) 627] has expressed similar view. In that case, a person was driving a vehicle and 0.06 grams of LSD Stamp was recovered from wallet kept in his pocket. **Hon'ble Kerala High Court** held that it could not be said that the vehicle was used for conveyance of the contraband and the vehicle is subject to confiscation. In Thausif Ahammad Bengre v. State of Kerala [2018 SCC OnLine Ker 3905] the vehicle was being driven by the driver and 40 grams Ganja was recovered from his possession. In that situation, Hon'ble Kerala High Court held that it is really fallacious to contend that the vehicle was used for carrying the contraband.*

23. It is relevant to point out that in case of direct involvement of the owner of the vehicle in prohibited use of the vehicle, he is made accused in the criminal case registered by the police. Even in case of his indirect involvement by way of permission for or connivance in use of his vehicle in commission of the offence, he is liable to be accused U/s. 47 of the Act. As such, unless the owner of the vehicle is an accused in the case, the court cannot hold that



the owner of the vehicle is directly or indirectly involved in the prohibited use of the vehicle.

24. It is also pertinent to note that in the light of various pronouncements of this Court, Bihar Government has issued letter dt. 7.2.2020 bearing Letter No. 13/HC- 06-55/2020-670. The letter has been written by Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department cum Prohibition, Excise and Registration Department to all District Collectors, Police Officers and Excise Officers. By this letter, the Government has clearly stated in para-2 of the letter that as per direction of this Court, such vehicle, from which no liquor has been recovered, will not be confiscated. In para-3 of the letter, the Govt. has stated that when the vehicle was being driven by the driver in drunken condition but no liquor has been recovered from the vehicle, only the driver would be prosecuted under the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016.

25. Coming to the case at hand we find that on 17.09.2020, the accused Satyendra Kumar and Sunil Yadav were allegedly riding the motorcycle in question and on search 13.9 liter illicit liquor was seized/recovered from the bag kept by the pillion rider, Sunil Yadav in his hand. There is no allegation, as emerging from the FIR, that the contraband was kept/concealed in any part of the motorcycle in question to carry it. In such situation, it would be erroneous to hold that the motorcycle was used to carry the contraband. The word "use" cannot be interpreted liberally giving expansive meaning. It has to be interpreted strictly as it has penal consequences. Even the object and scheme of the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act does not warrant expansive interpretation. At most, the persons who were found in illegal possession of the contraband may be prosecuted for offence as committed under the Act.

26. We also find that against the petitioner/owner of the vehicle there is no allegation of her direct or indirect involvement in commission of the alleged offence. That is why she has not been made accused in the criminal case registered by the police.



27. In view of the aforesaid facts and circumstances of the case, we find that the twin prerequisites for seizure and confiscation of a vehicle under the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016 - use of the vehicle in carrying/transporting the liquor or intoxicant and the consent or connivance of the owner of the vehicle in commission of the offence - are not fulfilled. Consequently the vehicle in question is not liable to be seized and confiscated under the Act.

28. Hence, the impugned order is arbitrary and hit by Article 14 of the Constitution. It is also violative of Constitutional right of the petitioner to hold property as provided in Article 300 A of the Constitution, which prohibits any deprivation of property without authority of law. The Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act no way authorises the official to seize or confiscate the motorcycle in the alleged facts and circumstances of the case. Hence, the seizure & confiscation of the motorcycle in question is without any authority of law. The confiscation order, is accordingly liable to be quashed. The petitioner, whose constitutional right to property has been violated, is entitled to adequate compensation. He is also entitled to compensation on account of expenditure and harassment in course of forced litigations.

*29. Hence, the impugned order dated 19.11.2021 passed by District Collector, Gopalganj in Confiscation (Excise) Case No. 700/2020 is quashed. The District Collector, Gopalganj is also directed to release the motorcycle in question forthwith. He is further directed to pay Rs. 1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lac) to the Petitioner towards compensation. The payment of the compensation must be made within **ten days** of the receipt of the order.*

30. The petition is allowed, accordingly”

8. We find from the law laid down in the case of **Sunaina** (*supra*), that involvement or connivance of the owner of the vehicle in illegal use of the vehicle for ferrying illicit liquor is an



essential prerequisite for confiscation of the vehicle or imposing any penalty for release of the vehicle. As far as the present case is concerned, admittedly the counter affidavit filed by the respondent-State does not show that either the petitioner is an accused in FIR bearing Sindhugarh P.S. Case No.14 of 2024 or he is in anyway involved in commission of the alleged offence and moreover, there is no whisper about the FIR filed by the petitioner regarding his motorcycle having been stolen being not authentic or unlawful. Therefore, we are of the considered opinion that if the vehicle in question was stolen on 05.12.2023, leading to lodging of an FIR for theft of the same bearing Wazirganj P.S. Case No. 723 of 2023 dated 06.12.2023, which was subsequently seized in connection with Excises Act case bearing Sindhugarh P.S. Case No.14 of 2024, wherein the petitioner has not been arrayed as an accused, the confiscating authority could not have passed the order of confiscation, especially in absence of any material to show any direct or indirect involvement of the petitioner/owner of the vehicle in commission of the alleged offence. The present case stands squarely covered by the judgment rendered by the Hon'ble Division Bench of this Court in the case of *Sunaina (supra)*.



9. Having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case and for the foregoing reasons, we set aside the impugned order dated 07.02.2025, passed in Confiscation Case No.656 of 2024 by the learned Assistant Commissioner, Prohibition, Gaya and direct for release of the motorcycle of the petitioner, within a period of two weeks from the date of receipt/communication of a copy of this order.

10. Accordingly, present writ petition stands allowed.

(Mohit Kumar Shah, J)

(Arun Kumar Jha, J)

GAURAV S./-

AFR/NAFR	AFR
CAV DATE	NA
Uploading Date	10.04.2026
Transmission Date	NA

