

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

116

CRA-S-998-SB-2004 (O&M)
Date of decision: 16.01.2024

Chattar Pal Singh

Versus

....Appellant

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE AMAN CHAUDHARY

Present : Mr. Amandeep Singh Manaise, Advocate for the appellant.
Mr. Manipal Singh Atwal, DAG, Punjab.

AMAN CHAUDHARY, J.

1. Challenge in the present appeal is to the judgment/order dated 24.04.2004, passed by the learned Additional Sessions Judge (Adhoc), Fast Track Court, Gurdaspur, whereby the appellant was convicted and sentenced as follows:

Offence u/s	Imprisonment	Fine	Default sentence
304-A IPC	RI for two years	Rs.1000/-	RI Three months

2. The facts in brief are that on 13.12.1997, while complainant-Uttam Singh with his brother and mother namely, Kuldip Singh and Mohinder Kaur respectively, were going on a scooter from village Bhikhariwala to Singhowal, they got struck by a tractor trolley, driven by the accused-appellant-Chattar Pal Singh. Mohinder Kaur succumbed to the injuries at the spot, whereas others also received multiple injuries in the said accident. On the basis of the statement of Uttam Singh, an FIR was registered.

3. After completion of investigation, final report under Section 173 Cr.P.C. was presented in the Court against the accused. On finding a prima facie case, charges were framed against him, to which he pleaded not guilty and claimed trial.
4. The prosecution, in order to prove its case, examined as many as 7 witnesses. Thereafter, the statement of the accused was recorded under Section 313 Cr.P.C. whereby incriminating evidence was put to him, which he denied and pleaded false implication. No evidence was led in the defence.
5. The trial Court came to the conclusion that prosecution has proved its case, and accordingly convicted and sentenced as mentioned in para No.1 above.
6. Hence, the present criminal appeal.
7. Learned counsel at the outset submits that the appellant does not wish to press the present criminal appeal on merits and prays for extending the benefit of probation under The Probation of Offenders Act, 1958, in view of the mitigating circumstances being that, he is having a minor son, nobody in the family is there to look after him as he is a divorcee and his parents have died, the incident pertains to the year 1997, first time offender and never misused the bail granted to him. Reliance is placed on **Ajaib Singh vs. State of Punjab and another**, CRR-2851-2009, decided on 03.03.2022
8. Learned State counsel submits that the Court below has rightly convicted the accused-appellant on the evidence produced by the prosecution. However, on the above-stated grounds, he has no objection if the prayer made by the learned counsel for the appellant is allowed.
9. Heard the learned counsel for the parties and perused the record.

10. Complainant-Uttam Singh-PW-3, who was the injured as well as eyewitness, in his statement had deposed that the tractor-trolley being driven by the appellant had hit the scooter from behind due to which they fell down and suffered multiple injuries. His mother had died at the spot. PW7-Dr.HS Dhillon proved the PMR of deceased Mohinder Kaur whereas PW-5, Dr.Rana Verma, who conducted medical legal examination proved the MLRs. Thus, the trial Court has properly examined the evidence and rightly convicted the appellant.

11. As regards the prayer made on behalf of the appellant is concerned, it would be apposite to make a reference to Section 4 of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958, which reads thus:

“4. Power of Court to release certain offenders on probation of good conduct.-

(1) When any person is found guilty of having committed an offence not punishable with death or imprisonment for life and the Court by which the person is found guilty is of opinion that, having regard to the circumstances of the case including the nature of the offence and the character of the offender, it is expedient to release him on probation of good conduct, then, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, the court may, instead of sentencing him at once to any punishment direct that he be released on his entering into a bond, with or without sureties, to appear and receive sentence when called upon during such period, not exceeding three years, as the Court may direct, and in the meantime to keep the peace and be of good behaviour: Provided that the Court shall not direct such release of an offender unless it is satisfied that the offender or his surety, if any, has a fixed place of abode or regular occupation in the place over which the Court exercises jurisdiction or in which the offender is likely to live during the period for which he enters into the bond.

(2) Before making any order under sub-section (1), the court shall take into consideration the report, if any, of the probation

officer concerned in relation to the case.

(3) When an order under sub-section (1) is made, the court may, if it is of opinion that in the interests of the offender and of the public it is expedient so to do, in addition pass a supervision order directing that the offender shall remain under the supervision of a probation officer named in the order during such period, not being less than one year, as may be specified therein, and may in such supervision order, impose such conditions as it deems necessary for the due supervision of the offender.

(4) The court making a supervision order under sub-section (3) shall require the offender, before he is released, to enter into a bond, with or without sureties, to observe the conditions specified in such order and such additional conditions with respect to residence, abstention from intoxicants or any other matter as the court may, having regard to the particular circumstances, consider fit to impose for preventing a repetition of the same offence or a commission of other offences by the offender.

(5) The court making a supervision order under sub-section (3) shall explain to the offender the terms and conditions of the order and shall forthwith furnish one copy of the supervision order to each of the offenders, the sureties, if any, and the probation officer concerned.”

12. It would be worthwhile to refer to the judgment of **Ratan Lal vs. State of Punjab**, AIR 1965 SC 444, whereby Hon’ble the Supreme Court, regarding the purpose and object of ‘The Probation of Offenders Act, 1958’ had observed and held that, “The Act is a milestone in the progress of the modern liberal trend of reform in the field of penology. It is the result of the recognition of the doctrine that the object of criminal law is more to reform the individual offender than to punish him. Broadly stated the Act distinguishes offenders below 21 years of age and those above that age, and offenders who are guilty of having committed an offence punishable with death or imprisonment for life and those

who are guilty of a lesser offence. While in the case of offenders who are above the age of 21 years, absolute discretion is given to the court to release them after admonition or on probation of good conduct, subject to the condition laid down in the appropriate provision of the Act, in the case of offenders below the age of 21 years an injunction is issued to the court not to sentence them to imprisonment unless it is satisfied that having regard to the circumstances of the case, including the nature of the offence and the character of the offenders, it is not desirable to deal with them under Ss. 3 and 4 of the Act.”

13. Hon’ble the Supreme Court in **Sitaram Paswan and Anr. vs. State of Bihar**, AIR 2005 SC 3534, observed that benefit of probation can be extended at the appellate or revisional stage as well, and held that, “For exercising the power which is discretionary, the Court has to consider circumstances of the case, the nature of the offence and the character of the offender. While considering the nature of the offence, the Court must take a realistic view of the gravity of the offence, the impact which the offence had on the victim. The benefit available to the accused under Section 4 of the Probation of Offenders Act is subject to the limitation embodied in the provisions and the word "may" clearly indicates that the discretion vests with the Court whether to release the offender in exercise of the powers under Section 3 or 4 of the Probation of Offenders Act having regard to the nature of the offence and the character of the offender and overall circumstances of the case. The powers under Section 4 of the Probation of Offenders Act vest with the Court when any person is found guilty of the offence committed, not punishable with death or imprisonment for life. This power can be exercised by the Courts while finding the person guilty and if the Court thinks that

having regard to the circumstances of the case, including the nature of the offence and the character of the offender, benefit should be extended to the accused, the power can be exercised by the Court even at the appellate or revisional stage and also by this Court while hearing appeal under Article 136 of the Constitution of India.”

14. It would also be gainful to make a reference to the judgments in **Aitha Chander Rao vs. State of A.P.**, 1981 (Supp) SCC 17, **A.P. Raju vs. State of Orissa**, 1995 Supp (2) SCC 385 and **Om Prakash vs. State of Haryana**, (2001) 10 SCC 477, and **State of Karnataka vs. Muddappa** 1999 SCC (Cri) 1046, wherein the Apex Court extended the humanizing principle to a conviction where *mens rea* remains absent as in a case of rash and negligent driving under Section 279 read with Section 304-A IPC and convict is first-time offender, who has faced protracted trial, no purpose would be served to suffer the sentence imposed.

15. In **Paul George vs State of N.C.T. of Delhi**, 2008 (4) SCC 185, the appellant, who was Head Constable Driver, had come-face on the incoming traffic, which was the factor that caused the accident, Hon’ble the Supreme Court though found that it was clearly not a matter within the colour of duty, thus he was not be covered by Section 140 of Delhi Police Act, however, observed that ends of justice would be met, if he is directed to be released on probation, he having faced and fought the litigation tenaciously that lasted for 20 years and throughout had good service career, but for this one aberration.

16. This Court in the case of **Ajaib Singh** (supra), wherein the petitioner had been convicted under Sections 304A and 279 and 427 IPC, granted probation

as he had undergone a sentence of 3 months and 6 days out of 2 years of the sentence and faced the protracted trial for approximately 9 years. Further, in **Bishan Singh vs. State of Punjab**, CRR-1283-2008, decided on 27.01.2023, where the petitioner was released on probation, it was observed that after having faced criminal proceedings for more than 23 years, no useful purpose would be served by sending him back to jail, more so, when he was not involved in any other criminal case.

17. In the case of **Shivani Sharma vs. State (NCT of Delhi)**, 2021(222) AIC 445, the conviction of the accused under Sections 304A and 279 IPC, was upheld but the sentence was modified and she was directed to be released for probation, in view of Section 4 of The Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 and Section 360 CrPC, considering the fact that she has a clean record otherwise and litigation has been going on for more than 7 years. Likewise, in **Harendra Singh vs. State of Uttarakhand**, 2021 (114) ACrC 52, the revisionist convicted for the offence punishable under Sections 279, 304A, 337 and 338 IPC, being a first time offender, was released on probation, in light of Section 4 of The Probation of Offenders Act, 1958, to reform himself after having faced the trial for almost 11 years.

18. Reverting to the facts of the present case as regards the prayer made on behalf of the appellant is concerned, this Court considering the mitigating circumstances and the judgments referred to above, finds that the ends of justice would be adequately met if the appellant is granted the benefit of probation of good conduct.

19. As a consequence to the above, present criminal appeal is hereby

disposed of with a direction to grant probation to the appellant for a period of one year, on the following conditions as enshrined under Section of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958:

- (1) He shall execute a bond for good behaviour with two solvent sureties in a sum of Rs.25,000/- which shall be executed before the trial Court within a period of one month from today.
- (2) The said bond shall be in force for a period of one year.
- (3) He shall be subject to the supervision of the Probation Officer and subject to the conditions laid down in the Probation of Offenders Act.

20. It is clarified that in case there is any breach of the aforesaid conditions, the appellant will forthwith be taken into custody and shall have to undergo the sentence awarded to him by the trial Court.

(AMAN CHAUDHARY)
JUDGE

16.01.2024
Ankur

Whether speaking/reasoned : Yes / No
Whether reportable : Yes / No