

2025:PHHC:035895



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

244

CRR-1581-2024(O&M)
Date of decision: 12th March, 2025

Gurpreet Singh ...Petitioner
Versus
State of Punjab ...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MRS. JUSTICE MANISHA BATRA

Present: Mr. Vishavjeet Singh Rishi, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Ms. Himani Arora, Assistant Advocate General, Punjab.

MANISHA BATRA, J. (Oral)

1. The instant revision petition has been filed by the petitioner challenging the judgment of conviction and order on quantum of sentence both dated 22.11.2018, passed by the Court of learned Judicial Magistrate First Class, Samrala (*hereinafter referred to as 'the trial Court'*) in case titled as *State vs. Gurpreet Singh*, arising out of FIR No. 87 dated 30.06.2016, registered under Sections 323, 325 and 506 of IPC at Police Station Machhiwara Sahib, District Ludhiana, whereby the petitioner was held guilty and convicted for commission of aforementioned offences and was sentenced to undergo maximum rigorous imprisonment for a period of one year with default clause. He also challenged the judgment dated 18.07.2024, passed by the Court of learned Additional Sessions Judge, Ludhiana (*hereinafter referred to as 'appellate Court'*) in Criminal Appeal

2025:PHHC:035895



No. 1000 of 2018, titled as ***Gurpreet Singh vs. State of Punjab***, whereby the appeal filed by the petitioner had been dismissed.

2. Today, learned counsel for the petitioner has submitted that in compliance with order dated 12.12.2024, passed by this Court, the petitioner has deposited the amount of Rs.50,000/- with the trial Court and he has been released on interim bail. It is further submitted that in compliance with the aforesaid order, the parties had appeared before the Mediator at Ludhiana and an amicable settlement has arrived at between them, vide report dated 05.03.2025 submitted by the Nodal Officer of the Mediation and Conciliation Centre, Ludhiana. It is submitted by learned counsel for the petitioner that he did not press the present petition on its merits and restricts his argument to the extent that benefit of probation be granted to the petitioner. Hence, the sole consideration before this Court is as to whether the prayer made by the petitioner for extending him benefit of probation can be accepted or not?

3. As mentioned above, the petitioner had been guilty for commission of offences punishable under Sections 323, 325 and 506 of IPC. The appellate Court had also dismissed the appeal filed by the petitioner. Since then much water has flown under the bridge. The petitioner herein is facing rigors of litigation from the last about 09 years. The petitioner has already undergone actual imprisonment a period of 05 months and 02 days and in the intervening period, he is not involved in any other criminal case. He is leading happy and peaceful life with his family. Hence, learned

2025:PHHC:035895



counsel for the petitioner has urged that the petitioner is entitled to the benefit of probation.

4. Before considering the prayer made by the petitioner to release him on probation, let us have a look on the law on this point. The aims and object of the Probation Act came to be decided by Hon'ble Apex Court in case ***Jugal Kishore Prasad v. State of Bihar, 1972 AIR (SC) 2522***. Hon'ble Supreme Court while considering the scope of the Probation Act had held as under:-

"The Probation of Offenders Act was enacted in 1958 with a view to provide for the release of offenders of certain categories on probation or after due admonition and for matters connected therewith. The object of the Act is to prevent the conversion of youthful offenders into obdurate criminals as a result of their association with hardened criminals of mature age in case the youthful offenders are sentenced to undergo imprisonment in jail. The above object is in consequence with the present trend in the field of penology, according to which effort should be made to bring about correction and reformation of the individual offenders and not to resort to retributive justice. Modern criminal jurisprudence recognizes that no one is a born criminal and that a good many crimes are the product of socio-economic milieu. Although not much can be done for hardened criminals, considerable stress has been laid on bringing about reform of young offenders not guilty of very serious offences and of preventing their association with hardened criminals."

5. Reliance can also be placed upon ***Isher Das v. State of Punjab, AIR 1972 Supreme Court 1295*** and ***Arvind Mohan Sinha v. Amulya Kumar***

2025:PHHC:035895



Biswas and others, 1974 AIR (SC) 1818, wherein Hon'ble Supreme Court had taken the similar view. Relevant paragraph of Arvind Mohan Sinha's case (supra) reads as under:-

"The Probation of Offenders Act is a reformatory measure and its object is to reclaim amateur offenders who, if spared the indignity of incarceration, can be usefully rehabilitated in society. A jail term should normally be enough to wipe out the stain of guilt but the sentence which the society passes on convicts is relentless. The ignominy commonly associated with a jail term and the social stigma which attached to convicts often render the remedy worse than the disease and the year purposes of punishment stands in the danger of being frustrated. In recalcitrant cases punishment has to be deterrent so that others similarly minded may warn themselves of the hazards of taking to a career of crime. But the novice who strays into the path of crime ought, in the interest of society, be treated as being socially stick. Crimes are not always rooted in criminal tendencies and their origin may lie in psychological factors induced by hunger, want and poverty. The Probation of Offenders Act recognises the importance of environmental influence in the commission of crimes and prescribes a remedy whereby the offender can be reformed and rehabilitated in society. An attitude of social defiance and recklessness which comes to a convict who, after a jail term, is apt to think that he has no more to lose or fear may breed a litter of crime. The object of the Probation of Offenders Act is to nip that attitude in the bud. Winifred A Sikin describes probation as a system which provides a means of re-education without the necessity of breaking up the offender's normal life and removing him from the natural

2025:PHHC:035895



surroundings of his home. (English Juvenile Courts (1938) page 162) Edwin R. Sutherland raises it to a status of a convicted offender. (Principles of Criminology, 4th Edn. (1947) page 383)."

6. In view of the ratio of law as laid down in aforecited judgment, the question that arises before this Court is that as to whether the petitioner is entitled to the benefit of probation or not ? In the considered opinion of this Court, the answer to this question must be in the affirmative.

7. The object underlying the provisions of Sections 4 and 6 of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 (*for brevity "the Probation Act"*) and Sections 360 & 361 of Cr.PC, is that the first offenders be not sent to jail for the commission of less serious offences, on account of grave risk to their attitude to life to which they are likely to be exposed as a result of their association with the hardened and habitual criminal inmates of the jail. Their stay in jail in such circumstances might well attract them towards a life of crime instead of reforming them. This would clearly cause more harm than to reform them, and for that reason, it would perhaps also be to an extent prejudicial to the larger interests of the society as a whole. Perhaps that was the reason that the mandatory injunction against imposition of sentence of imprisonment has been embodied in Section 6 of the Probation Act. This mandate is inspired by the desire to keep the young delinquent/first offenders away from the possibility of association or close contact with hardened criminals and their evil influence. Therefore, these beneficial provisions have to be liberally construed.

2025:PHHC:035895



8. The sole intention of the legislature in passing probation laws is to give person of a particular type of chance of reformation, which they would not get if sent to prison. The types of persons, who are in the contemplation of the legislature under the probation law are those who are not hardened or dangerous criminals, but those who have committed offences under some momentary weakness of character or some tempting situation. By placing the offender on probation, the Court saves him from the stigma of jail life and also from the contaminating influence of hardened prison inmates. Probation also serves another purpose, which is quite significant though of secondary importance. It helps in eliminating overcrowding in jails by keeping many offenders away from the prison. Section 360 Cr.P.C. deals with order to release the accused on probation of good conduct or after admonition, whereas Section 361 Cr.P.C. provides *that "where in any case the Court could have dealt with an accused person under Section 360 or under the provisions of the Probation Act, but has not done so, it shall record in its judgment the special reasons for not having done so."*

9. Therefore, the conjoint and meaningful reading of the beneficial provisions of the Probation Act would reveal that non-obstante clause contained in Section 4 that points to the conclusion that the provisions of this Section would have overriding effect, shall prevail if the conditions described therein are fulfilled. Meaning thereby, the Court has the ample power to release the first offender of minor offences on probation, keeping

2025:PHHC:035895



into focus the nature & manner of the crime, age of the offender, other antecedents and attending circumstances of the offence instead of committing him to jail.

10. Likewise, Section 4 of the Probation Act postulates that 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 the 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. The learned State counsel has acknowledged the factual matrix of the case and legal position.

11. In view of the discussion as made above and also taking into consideration the agony and trauma, which the petitioner has undergone during protracted trial, appeal, revision, his antecedents, nature of offence, totality of other facts & circumstances emanating from the record and also in view of the fact that the matter stands amicably settled between the parties, I am of the considered opinion that no useful purpose would be served by sending him again into jail to serve out the remaining period of sentence and

2025:PHHC:035895



instead of sending him to prison, he be released on probation. Accordingly, it is directed that petitioner be released on probation on his furnishing personal bond (within one month) in the sum of Rs. 25,000/- with one surety of the like amount to the satisfaction of the trial Court, subject to the conditions that he would keep the peace and be of good behaviour, for a period of one year from the date of passing of this order and shall disclose his present address and phone number before the trial Court in the form of an affidavit at the time of furnishing bonds. Needless to mention that in case, he is found to be indulged in any illegal activities, the sentence awarded to him by the appellate Court shall stand revived.

12. As such, the instant revision petition is hereby dismissed on merits and the impugned judgment passed by the appellate Court is maintained. However, the order of sentence is accordingly modified to the extent and in the manner depicted herein above. The trial Court is directed to disburse the amount of Rs. 50,000/- to the complainant/injured on his moving an appropriate application in that regard.

13. Needless to mention that natural consequences & compliance will follow accordingly.

[MANISHA BATRA]
JUDGE

12th March, 2025
Waseem Ansari

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| 1. Whether speaking/ reasoned | : | Yes / No |
| 2. Whether reportable | : | Yes / No |