



2026:AHC-LKO:19202

**HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD
LUCKNOW**

CRIMINAL APPEAL No. - 1895 of 2004

Azmat @ Zahoor @ Jatoo And Another

.....Appellant(s)

Versus

State of U.P.

.....Respondent(s)

Counsel for Appellant(s)	:	Raj Narain Rastogi, Anurag.S.Kaalesh
Counsel for Respondent(s)	:	Govt.Advocate

Court No. - 28

HON'BLE PRAMOD KUMAR SRIVASTAVA, J.

1. List of cases has been revised and the case is being taken up in the revised call.
2. Heard, learned counsel for the appellant and learned A.G.A for the State.
3. The present appeal under Section 374 (2) of the Criminal Procedure Code has been preferred against the judgment and order dated 23.08.2004 passed by the Court of Special Judge (SC/ST Act), Lucknow in Session Trial No. 1016/1998 in Crime No. 124/1997 of Police Station Thakurganj, District Lucknow convicting the appellant Salim alias Kallu alias Kalia under Section 323/34 I.P.C. for a period of one month rigorous imprisonment, under Section 324/34 I.P.C. for three months rigorous imprisonment along with fine of Rs. 2000/- and defaulting fine to undergo an additional rigorous imprisonment for a period of two months and under Section 3(1)(X) of SC/ST Act for six months rigorous imprisonment. All the sentences will run concurrently and the period already undergone in jail to be adjusted against the awarded sentence.
4. Brief facts of the case are that, according to the prosecution, on 26 March 1997 at approximately 9:00 PM, while the complainant Amreesh Kumar Sonkar was returning home from Thakurganj crossing, he was accosted near the Ahmadganj Pajawa tri-junction. The appellant-accused, Salim alias Kalia, and his father Azmat alias Jhur, were allegedly lying in wait armed with sticks to which "farsas" (pole-axes) were attached. They assaulted the complainant, causing multiple injuries including sharp-weapon wounds to the head and shoulder, which resulted in his hospitalization at Balrampur Hospital for seven days. The dispute reportedly stemmed from a previous altercation involving the snatching of a horse-cart (tonga) belonging to the son-in-law of the complainant's brother. The information of the incident was provided by the complainant at Police Station Thakurganj, Lucknow, on the night of the incident, leading to the registration of F.I.R. No. 82/97 at 10:00 PM against Azmat and Salim under Sections 323, 504, 506 I.P.C. and Section 3(1)(x) of the SC/ST Act.

5. The Investigating Officer, during the course of the investigation, visited the place of occurrence and prepared the site plan. However, as noted in the grounds of appeal, the Investigating Officer was not produced before the Trial Court for examination, depriving the defense of the opportunity to cross-examine him regarding the site plan and witness statements. Following the investigation, a charge sheet was submitted against Azmat alias Jhur and Salim alias Kallu under Sections 323, 324, 504, 506 IPC and Section 3(1)(x) of the SC/ST Act.

6. The Trial Court framed charges against both accused, Azmat and Salim, under Sections 323/34, 324/34, 504, 506 IPC and Section 3(1)(x) of the SC/ST Act. The accused-appellants denied the charges leveled against them and claimed to be tried, asserting that they had been falsely implicated.

7. In order to prove its case, the prosecution examined five witnesses: PW-1 Amreesh Kumar Sonkar (Complainant), PW-2 Satish Sonkar, PW-3 Ram Chaudhary (Head Constable), PW-4 Rakesh alias Pappu, and PW-5 Dr. A.K. Nayyar. As documentary evidence, the prosecution filed the Tehrir (Exhibit Ka-1), Chik F.I.R. (Exhibit Ka-2), G.D. Entry (Exhibit Ka-3), and the Medical Examination Report (Exhibit Ka-5).

8. After the conclusion of the prosecution evidence, the statements of the accused-appellants under Section 313 Cr.P.C. were recorded. The Trial Court explained the incriminating circumstances, which the appellants denied, maintaining their innocence. Notably, appellant Salim highlighted his age at the time of the incident (1997) to assert his status as a juvenile, a fact the trial court allegedly overlooked.

9. Thereafter, the learned trial court, after hearing learned counsel for both the parties and appreciating the entire evidence, oral as well as documentary, found the accused/appellant Salim alias Kalia guilty and convicted him under Section 323 read with Section 34 I.P.C. for a period of one month rigorous imprisonment, under Section 324 read with Section 34 I.P.C. for three months rigorous imprisonment along with a fine of Rs. 2000/-, and under Section 3(1)(x) of the SC/ST Act for six months rigorous imprisonment. The court directed that all sentences shall run concurrently and further stipulated that in case of default in payment of the fine, the appellant shall undergo an additional two months of rigorous imprisonment.

10. Feeling aggrieved and dissatisfied with the impugned judgment and order of conviction, the accused-appellant has preferred the present appeal before this Court.

11. Learned counsel for the appellant submitted that although he has preferred the appeal against the judgment of conviction and order of punishment, but at this stage, he only intends to press the appeal in respect of sentence only and do not want to press the appeal on merit.

12. Learned counsel for the appellant submitted that the State of Uttar Pradesh has its own local law of probation i.e. Uttar Pradesh First Offenders Probation Act, 1938. He

further submitted that the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 (Central Act) (herein after referred as the Act of 1958) is also applicable in the State of Uttar Pradesh as held by Hon'ble the Supreme Court in the case of **Mohd. Hashim Vs. State of U.P.; (2017) 2 SCC 198**. Thus, learned counsel for the appellant submitted that it is upon the discretion of the Court to grant benefits in either of the Acts.

13. Learned counsel for the appellant submitted that the alleged incident took place nearly 29 years ago (1997) and the appellant has no criminal antecedents either prior to or since the said occurrence. It is submitted that the protracted trial and the long pendency of the present appeal (since 2004) have effectively deprived the appellant of his fundamental right to a speedy trial. Given that the appellant was a first-time offender with no previous convictions, the Trial Court ought to have extended the benefit of Section 4 of the Probation of First Offenders Act, 1958, to him, as was granted to the co-appellant Azmat. It is further submitted that this Hon'ble Court may graciously consider extending the benefit of the Act of 1958 to the surviving accused-appellant, Salim, in the interest of justice.

14. Learned A.G.A. on the other hand opposed the appeal and has submitted that there is no material irregularity or illegality committed by trial court and keeping in view the evidence on record, accused-appellant has been rightly convicted.

15. Learned A.G.A. further states that the benefit of Section 4 of the Act of 1958 could be extended to the accused-appellant on certain stipulations as specified in Section 4 of the Act of 1958.

16. Before dealing with the contention of learned counsel for the appellant, it is useful to quote Sections 3 and 4 of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958:

"3. Power of court to release certain offenders after admonition.-

"Where any person is found guilty of having committed an offence punishable under Section 379 or Section 380 or Section 381 or Section 404 or Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code, (45 of 1860) or any offence punishable with imprisonment for not more than two years, or with fine, or with both, under the Indian Penal code, or any other law, and no previous conviction is proved against him 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 so to do, then, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, the Court may, instead of sentencing him to any punishment or releasing him on probation of good conduct under section 4 release him after due admonition.

Explanation.-For the purposes of this Section, previous conviction against a person shall include any previous order made against him under this

Section or Section 4.

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."

17. Section 4 of the Act of 1958 is applicable where a person is found guilty of committing an offence where punishment is neither life sentence nor death. The Court may release such an accused on probation of good conduct on his furnishing a bond as mentioned in the Section. The Court in applying the provisions of this section is also required to consider the circumstances of the case, character of the offender and nature of the offence before exercising its discretion.

18. So far as the prayer of learned counsel for the appellant for providing benefits of Section 4 of the Act of 1958 is concerned, it is essential to discuss the legal position and law propounded by the Apex Court.

19. That Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Ratan Lal vs State of Punjab AIR 1965 SC 444**, while discussing the purpose and object of Probation of Offenders Act, 1958, has observed in para no. 4, as follows:—

"4. 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."

20. Further the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Ved Prakash vs State of Haryana (1981) 1 SCC 447** : AIR 1981 SC 643 while discussing on the duty of Bench and Bar regarding compliance of Section 360 Code of Criminal Procedure read with Section 4 of Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 was pleased to observe as under:—

"The offence, for which conviction has been rendered, is one which will be attracted by S. 360 or at any rate the Probation of offenders Act, 1958. The materials before us are imperfect because the Trial Court has been perfunctory in discharging its sentencing functions. We must emphasise that sentencing an accused person is a sensitive exercise of discretion and not a routine or mechanical prescription acting on hunch. The Trial Court should have collected materials necessary to help award a just punishment in the circumstances. The social background and the personal factors of the crime-doer are very relevant although in practice Criminal Courts have hardly paid attention to the social milieu or the personal circumstances of the offender. Even if S. 360 Cr.P.C. is not attracted, it is the duty of the sentencing Court to be activist enough to collect such facts as have a bearing on punishment with a rehabilitating slant. The absence of such materials in the present case has left us with little assistance even from the counsel. Indeed members of the bar also do not pay sufficient attention to these legislative provisions which relate to dealing with an offender in such manner that he becomes a non-offender. We emphasise this because the legislation which relate to amelioration in punishment have been regarded as 'Minor Acts' and, therefore, of little consequence. This is a totally wrong approach and even if the Bar does not help, the Bench must fulfil the humanising mission of sentencing implicit in such enactments as the Probation of offenders Act."

21. That it is also noteworthy that this Hon'ble Court in the case of **Subhash Chand vs State of U.P. 2015 Law Suit (All) 1343**, has emphatically laid down the need to apply the law of probation and give benefit of the beneficial legislation to accused persons in appropriate cases. This court issued following directions to all trial courts and appellate courts:—

"It appears that the aforesaid beneficial legislation has been lost sight of and even the Judges have practically forgotten this provision of law. Thus, before parting with the case, this Court feels that I will be failing in discharge of my duties, if a word of caution is not written for the trial courts and the appellate courts. The Registrar General of this Court is directed to circulate copy of this Judgment to all the District Judges of U.P., who shall in turn ensure circulation of the copy of this order amongst all the judicial officers working under him and shall ensure strict compliance of this Judgment. The District Judges in the State are also directed to call for reports every months from all the courts, i.e. trial courts and appellate courts dealing with such matters and to state as to in how many cases the benefit of the aforesaid provisions have been granted to the accused. The District Judges are also directed to monitor such cases personally in each monthly meeting. The District Judges concerned shall send monthly statement to the Registrar General as to in how many cases the trial court/appellate court has granted the benefit of the aforesaid beneficial legislation to the accused. A copy of this order be placed before the Registrar General for immediate compliance."

22. Further the Hon'ble Apex Court in *State of Maharashtra vs Jagmohan Singh Kuldeep Singh Anand* (2004) 7 SCC 659 has extended the benefit of The Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 to the appellants, and observed as under:—

"The learned counsel appearing for the accused submitted that the accident is of the year 1990. The parties are educated and neighbors. The learned counsel, therefore, prayed that benefit of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 may be granted to the accused. The prayer made on behalf of the accused seems to be reasonable. The accident is more than ten years old. The dispute was between the neighbors over a trivial issue of claiming of drainage. The accident took place in a fit of anger. All the parties educated and also distantly related. The accident is not such as to direct the accused to undergo sentence of imprisonment. In our opinion, it is a fit case in which the accused should be released on probation by directing them to execute a bond of one year for good behaviour."

23. That coming to the point of desirability of extending the benefit of Probation Act to the accused/ appellants in *Sitaram Paswan and Anr v/s State of Bihar* AIR 2005 SC 3534 Supreme Court held as under:-

"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."

24. That it is also noteworthy that Hon'ble Apex Court in the case of **Mohd. Hashim v. State of U.P and Ors. AIR 2017 SC page 660**, was pleased to observe as under:

"20-.....In Rattan Lal v. State of Punjab AIR 1965 SC 444. Subba Rao, J., speaking for the majority, opined thus:-

"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 conditions laid down in the appropriate provisions 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 Sections 3 and 4 of the Act."

25. That Hon'ble Apex Court in case of **Jagat Pal Singh & others vs. State of Haryana AIR 2000 SC 3622** has given the benefit of probation while upholding the conviction of accused persons under Sections 323, 452, 506 I.P.C. and has released the accused persons on executing a bond before the Magistrate for maintaining good

behaviour and peace for the period of six months.

26. That it is noteworthy that the incident took place way back on **26.03.1997**. The accused-appellant, **Salim alias Kalia**, has been facing the rigors of this legal battle for nearly **29 years**. As per the record, there are no prior criminal antecedents against the appellant. That it is noteworthy that the incident took place way back on 26.03.1997. The accused-appellant, Salim alias Kalia, has been facing the rigors of this legal battle for nearly 29 years. As per the record, there are no prior criminal antecedents against the appellant.

27. Considering the facts and circumstances of the case, and noting that the co-appellant Azmat was already granted the benefit of probation by the trial court due to his age and clean record, I am of the view that the benefit of the provisions of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 should also be extended to the surviving accused/appellant, Salim.

28. In light of the above discussion, the conviction of the appellant **Salim alias Kalia** is maintained; however, the sentence is modified. Instead of undergoing the awarded imprisonment, he is granted the benefit of Section 4 of the Probation of Offenders Act, 1958. He is directed to furnish a personal bond of Rs. 10,000/- along with two sureties of the like amount before the District Probation Officer/Trial Court, with an undertaking to maintain peace and good behavior for a period of two years.

29. It is further directed that the appellant shall deposit a sum of Rs. 5,000/- as compensation before the trial court. The trial court shall release the said amount in favor of the injured/complainant, Amreesh Kumar Sonkar. In the event he is not alive, the said amount shall be released to his legal heirs.

30. In case of a breach of any of the aforementioned conditions of the bond, the appellant Salim alias Kalia shall be taken into custody to undergo the original sentence awarded by the trial court.

31. With the above modification, the instant criminal appeal is **partly allowed**.

32. A certified copy of the order be also sent to the court concerned for compliance.

33. Office is directed to communicate this order to the court concerned for necessary compliance.

34. Lower court record, if any, shall also be sent back to the district court concerned.

March 17, 2026
Haseen U.

(Pramod Kumar Srivastava,J.)