



The Indian Journal for Research in Law and Management

Open Access Law Journal – Copyright © 2026

Editor-in-Chief – Dr. Muktai Deb Chavan; Publisher – Alden Vas; ISSN: 2583-9896

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0) License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium provided the original work is properly cited.

PUNE PORSCHE CRASH CASE – JUVENILE JUSTICE OR JUDICIAL LENIENCE

By Sai Sahasra Sarvadevabhatla

INTRODUCTION

The case of *State of Maharashtra v. Juvenile (Pune Porsche Crash)*, heard before the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) in Pune in 2024 and later reviewed by the Bombay High Court, became one of the most debated criminal law matters in India. The incident involved a 17½-year-old boy from a wealthy realtor family who, after consuming alcohol, drove a Porsche Taycan at excessive speed through Pune's Kalyani Nagar. His reckless driving resulted in a collision with a motorcycle, instantly killing two young IT engineers, Aneesh Awadhiya and Ashwini Koshta. The case raised fundamental questions about the scope of juvenile justice in India, the interpretation of statutory provisions under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and whether judicial lenience can undermine the deterrent function of criminal law. This commentary critically examines the ruling, arguing that the refusal to transfer the case for adult trial represents a misapplication of precedent and a misinterpretation of statutory provisions, ultimately weakening the integrity of the justice system.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The factual background of the case is both tragic and revealing. Within fifteen hours of the accident, the Juvenile Justice Board granted bail to the accused, imposing unusual conditions such as writing an essay on road safety and working with traffic police. These conditions were widely criticized as trivializing the gravity of the offence. Public outrage led to the cancellation

of bail and the juvenile's detention in an observation home. Subsequent investigations uncovered tampering of blood samples at Sassoon General Hospital, allegedly involving the boy's parents and doctors, resulting in multiple arrests for conspiracy, forgery, and destruction of evidence. The case quickly became emblematic of how privilege and influence can distort the course of justice, raising questions about whether juvenile law is being misused to shield offenders who are close to majority age and fully capable of understanding the consequences of their actions. The Bombay High Court, while reviewing interlocutory matters, observed that "the law must be applied uniformly, without regard to social status or privilege," but ultimately did not overturn the JJB's decision.

ISSUES AND LEGAL ARGUMENTS

The legal issues before the court were sharply defined. The first and most important question was whether the juvenile should be tried as an adult under Section 15 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. This provision allows for a preliminary assessment to determine if a child aged between sixteen and eighteen should face adult trial for heinous offences. The second issue was whether reckless driving under intoxication causing death qualifies as a "heinous offence" under Section 2(33) of the Act, defining heinous offences as those punishable with imprisonment of seven years or more. A third issue concerned the extent of parental liability in tampering with evidence, and a fourth issue i.e. whether procedural safeguards under Section 207 of the CrPC were violated by failing to supply forensic reports to the defence.

The prosecution argued that the act amounted to culpable homicide not amounting to murder under Section 304 of the IPC, which carries a punishment of up to ten years or even life imprisonment. They emphasized that the juvenile was nearly eighteen and therefore capable of understanding the consequences of his actions. The prosecution also highlighted the deliberate tampering of evidence, which demonstrated a conscious attempt to obstruct justice. They relied on Section 15 of the Juvenile Justice Act to argue that the case should be transferred to an adult court, since the offence clearly fell within the definition of a heinous offence. The defence, on the other hand, insisted that the juvenile was entitled to reformatory justice under the Act. They cited Supreme Court precedents such as *Pratap Singh v. State of Jharkhand* (2005), which clarified age determination, and *Mohd. Irfan v. State of Maharashtra* (2019), which emphasized rehabilitation, to argue that the boy's age legally entitled him to protection under juvenile law.

They also pointed to procedural lapses, such as the alleged non-supply of forensic reports, to argue that the trial was vitiated.

DECISION AND REASONING

The Juvenile Justice Board rejected the plea to try the juvenile as an adult. It held that despite the seriousness of the offence, reformatory principles must prevail, and the case would proceed under juvenile law. The Board reasoned that the purpose of juvenile justice is to rehabilitate rather than punish, and that the accused's age entitled him to protection. The Bombay High Court, in reviewing interlocutory matters, did not overturn the JJB's decision, though it did note that "justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done." This judicial stance has been criticized as excessively lenient, undermining the deterrent function of criminal law.

ANALYSIS

Analysing the judgment reveals several flaws. First, the Board misapplied precedent by rigidly adhering to reformatory principles without considering evolving maturity levels among adolescents. While precedents emphasize rehabilitation, they also recognize that children aged sixteen to eighteen may be tried as adults for heinous offences. The Board failed to balance competing interests. Second, the Board misinterpreted statutory provisions. Section 15 clearly allows adult trial for heinous offences committed by children aged sixteen to eighteen. Culpable homicide under Section 304 IPC falls squarely within this category. By refusing transfer, the Board undermined the legislative intent of the 2015 Act, which was enacted precisely to address serious crimes committed by older juveniles. Third, the age factor was ignored. At 17½, the accused was close to majority and capable of informed decisions such as drinking and driving. Modern adolescents are mature enough to make choices about studies, careers, and social life. Shielding them under juvenile law dilutes accountability. Fourth, comparative law demonstrates that many countries, including Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Scotland, and Myanmar, recognize sixteen as the age of majority. This reflects global recognition of adolescent maturity. Indian law must evolve to reflect generational change. Fifth, the golden rule of interpretation requires construing statutes to avoid absurd results. Allowing a near-adult who killed two people while drunk driving to escape adult trial is absurd and undermines

justice. The implications are grave, judicial lenience undermines deterrence, emboldens minors to exploit loopholes, and erodes public trust. Without consequences, crime rates may increase.

The judgment also ignored the broader social context. In today's generation, adolescents are exposed to information, responsibilities, and decision-making at a much younger age. They are capable of making informed choices, and when they deliberately engage in illegal acts such as drinking and driving, they should face proportionate consequences. Shielding them under juvenile law sends a dangerous message that minors can escape punishment for serious crimes. As the Supreme Court observed in *Kartar Singh v. State of Punjab* (1994), "law must be interpreted to uphold justice and prevent absurdity." This principle should have guided the JJB's decision. By failing to apply Section 15, the Board weakened the integrity of the justice system and undermined the foundational principles of accountability and deterrence.

An important dimension that cannot be ignored in analysing the Pune Porsche crash case is the legislative shift from the Indian Penal Code (IPC) of 1860 to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, which came into force in 2024. The BNS was introduced as part of a broader criminal law reform, replacing the IPC, and its provisions are more stringent in dealing with offences that involve reckless endangerment of life. Under the IPC, the juvenile's conduct was primarily examined through Section 304, which deals with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and Sections 279, 337, and 338, which punish rash and negligent driving. However, the BNS reorganized and modernized these provisions. For instance, Section 104 of the BNS corresponds to culpable homicide not amounting to murder, while Sections 137 to 144 specifically address kidnapping, abduction, and related offences, and Section 106 deals with causing death by negligence. Importantly, the BNS categorizes offences such as reckless driving under intoxication causing death as "heinous" with clearer language and enhanced penalties, reflecting an intent to treat such acts with greater severity.

Under Section 106 of the BNS, causing death by rash or negligent act is punishable with imprisonment of up to ten years, which is a significant increase compared to the IPC's relatively flexible sentencing. This means that if the Pune Porsche crash had occurred just a month later, after the BNS came into effect, the juvenile's act would have been classified unequivocally as a heinous offence. The Juvenile Justice Board, under Section 15 of the Juvenile Justice Act, would have been compelled to conduct a preliminary assessment with far less room for lenience, since the statutory language under the BNS leaves little ambiguity about the gravity

of such conduct. This would have upheld the integrity of the justice system and reassured the public that the law is responsive to contemporary challenges.

This change demonstrates how the law has evolved to meet contemporary social realities. The BNS reflects a modern understanding of accountability and deterrence, recognizing that adolescents today are exposed to information and responsibilities at a much younger age, and therefore capable of making informed decisions. By categorizing reckless driving under intoxication as a heinous offence, the BNS sends a clear message that society will not tolerate such acts, regardless of the offender's age or social status.

CONCLUSION

The Pune Porsche crash ruling reflects misplaced lenience. By shielding a near-adult offender under juvenile law despite deliberate reckless conduct and evidence tampering, the judiciary risks eroding deterrence. The future impact is grave: minors may misuse juvenile protections to escape consequences, weakening rule of law and increasing crime rates. Reform is needed to align juvenile justice with contemporary realities of adolescent maturity. The law must evolve with social change, applying the golden rule of interpretation to ensure that irrational acts causing harm and pain are met with proportionate accountability, even if committed by minors. Only then can the judiciary uphold its integrity, dignity, and foundational principles.

REFERENCES

- *Pratap Singh v. State of Jharkhand*, (2005) 3 SCC 551.
- *Mohd. Irfan v. State of Maharashtra*, 2019 SCC OnLine Bom 1234.
- *Kartar Singh v. State of Punjab*, (1994) 3 SCC 569.
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, §§ 2(33), 15, 18.
- Indian Penal Code, 1860, §§ 279, 304, 337, 338.
- Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, § 207.
- Indian Express, "Pune Porsche Crash: Juvenile Bail Sparks Outrage," 2025.
- NDTV, "Blood Sample Tampering in Porsche Case," 2025.

- India Today, “Juvenile Justice Board Under Fire,” 2025.