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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRA-S-1925-SB-2007
Date of decision: 27.03.2025

BALJIT SNGH

V/S

...APPELLANT

STATE OF PUNJAB

...RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON’BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Ms. Aiman J. Chishti, Advocate as *amicus curiae*
for the appellant.

Mr. Rishabh Singla, AAG, Punjab.

HARPREET SINGH BRAR, J. (ORAL)

1. The prayer in the present appeal is to set aside the judgment of conviction and order of sentence dated 05.07.2007 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Jalandhar, whereby the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 18 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter ‘NDPS Act’), in the case stemming from FIR No.183 dated 15.12.2002 under Section 18 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Adampur.

2. The appellant was sentenced as mentioned below:

Offence	Sentence
Section 18 of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of one year and to pay fine of Rs.1,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo RI for 01 month.

3. Brief facts of the case are that on 15.02.2002, ASI Amar Nath along with other police officials and independent witness, were present at Bus



Stop Dhogri towards turn of village Madhur, when appellant was seen coming on a scooter. The police party stopped him and asked him to show the documents of the scooter. The appellant failed to show the papers. Upon search of scooter, 250 grams of Opium, wrapped in a polythene paper in its front basket was recovered. Subsequently, FIR (*supra*) was registered under Section 18 of the NDPS Act.

4. Learned *amicus curiae* for the appellant *inter alia* contends that the entire case of the prosecution is based upon the testimonies of official witnesses. One person, namely Sadha Singh, who was joined as an independent witness, was not examined by the prosecution. She further contends that the person, who arranged the scale and the weights, has also not been examined. She submits that the learned trial Court has failed to appreciate the defence led by the appellant, which clearly falsifies the case set up by ASI Amar Nath. She further submits that there is a delay in sending the representative sample in the office of Chemical Examiner, as discernible from Ex.PA. Lastly, she submits that the appellant has already undergone total custody period of 07 months and 01 day, out of total sentence of one year and he is not involved in any other case.

5. *Per contra*, learned State counsel opposes the prayer of the appellant as the learned Court below has passed a well-reasoned judgment based on correct appreciation of evidence available on record as such, he does not deserve any leniency.

6. Having heard learned counsel for the parties and after perusing the record with their able assistance, it transpires that the appellant was convicted for being in possession of 250 grams of Opium, which falls under



the purview of Section 18 NDPS Act. As per his custody certificate, he has already undergone an actual sentence of 07 months and 01 day out of total sentence of one year, in the instant case. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 18 NDPS Act, for the non-commercial quantity this Court is of the opinion that it would be in the interest of justice, if the sentence awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period already undergone by him.

7. In *Deo Narain Mandal vs. State of U.P. (2004) 7 SCC 257*, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has opined that awarding of sentence is not a mere formality in criminal cases. When a minimum and maximum term is prescribed by the statute with regard to the period of sentence, a discretionary element is vested in the Court. Background of each case, which includes factors like gravity of the offence, manner in which the offence is committed, age of the accused, should be considered while determining the quantum of sentence and this discretion is not to be used arbitrarily or whimsically. After assessing all relevant factors, proper sentence should be awarded bearing in mind the principle of proportionality to ensure the sentence is neither excessively harsh nor does it come across as lenient.

8. Further, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Ravada Sasikala vs. State of AP AIR 2017 SC 1166*, has reiterated that the imposition of sentence also serves a social purpose as it acts as a deterrent by making the accused realise the damage caused not only to the victim but also to the society at large. The law in this regard is well settled that opportunities of reformation must be granted and such discretion is to be exercised by evaluating all attending circumstances of each case by noticing the nature of the crime, the manner in



which the crime was committed and the conduct of the accused to strike a balance between the efficacy of law and the chances of reformation of the accused.

9. A perusal of the judgment of conviction passed by the learned trial Court indicates no perversity in its findings and the same is based on correct appreciation of evidence available on record. However, the FIR (*supra*) was lodged on 15.12.2002 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last more than 22 years. Since his conviction, he has grown into a law-abiding citizen and desires to live a peaceful life.

10. Therefore, in view of the discussion above, the present appeal is disposed of in the following terms:-

- (i) The judgment dated 05.07.2007 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Jalandhar is upheld.
- (ii) The order of sentence of even date i.e. 05.07.2007 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for one year and fine of Rs.1,000/- along with default mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.

11. The High Court Legal Services Authority is directed to pay remuneration to the learned *Amicus Curiae* as per rules.

March 27, 2025
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(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

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|------|---------------------------|--------|
| (i) | Whether speaking/reasoned | Yes/No |
| (ii) | Whether reportable | Yes/No |