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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRA-S-195-SB-2007

Date of decision: 07.03.2025

Bagicha Singh

....Appellant

Versus

State of Punjab

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. Nakul Sharma, Advocate
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 dated 18.12.2006 and order of sentence dated 19.12.2006 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Ferozepur, whereby the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 15 (b) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter ‘NDPS Act’), in the case stemming from FIR No.13 dated 03.02.2002, under Section 15 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Sadar Abohar.

2. The appellant was sentenced as mentioned below:

Offence	Sentence
Section 15 (b) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of one year and to pay fine of Rs.10,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo rigorous imprisonment for two months.

3. Brief facts of the case are that on 03.02.2002, a police party headed by ASI Vinod Kumar was on patrolling duty and when they were

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proceeding towards Village Doda and were 100 yards behind the bridge of the canal minor in the area of Village Bhagsar, the accused/appellant was apprehended with 10 Kg of Poppy Husk and sample of 250 grams from the same was drawn and then sent to the chemical examiner. Subsequently, FIR (*supra*) was registered under Section 15 of the NDPS Act.

4. Learned counsel for the appellant submits that the learned Court below has fallen into grave error in convicting the appellant, as his guilt has not been proved beyond reasonable doubt. He contends that mandatory provision under Section 50 of the NDPS Act has not been followed. Moreover, no independent witness has joined the investigation and the fact that the appellant was in conscious possession of the contraband has not been proved on record. Further, there are major discrepancies in the statements of PW-2 and PW-3. He further contends that the mandatory provisions of the NDPS Act have not been followed in the present case. He further contends that he is not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction dated 18.12.2006 on merits and restricts his prayer to modification of the order of quantum of sentence, to that of the sentence already undergone by the appellant, as he has already undergone a period of 05 months and 17 days in custody. The appellant is involved in one more case bearing FIR No.76 dated 10.04.2003 under Section 15 of the NDPS Act.

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 10 kg of Poppy Husk, i.e. intermediate quantity, attracting the offence of Section 15 NDPS Act, for which no minimum punishment has been prescribed. As per his custody certificate, he has already undergone an actual sentence of 05 months and 17 days out of total sentence of 01 year, in the instant case. Since, there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 15 NDPS Act, 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

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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 03.02.2002 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last more than 23 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 18.12.2006 passed by the learned Special Judge, Ferozepur, is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 19.12.2006 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 01 year with fine along with default mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.

11. Pending miscellaneous application(s), if any, shall also stand disposed of.

(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

07.03.2025*Neha*

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