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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRA-S-2025-SB-2008
Date of decision: 05.05.2025

NACHHATTAR SINGH

V/S

...APPELLANT

STATE OF PUNJAB

...RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON’BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Ms. Rahish P. Dudeja, Advocate for 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 06.10.2008 and order of sentence dated 07.10.2008 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Ludhiana, whereby the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 18 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter referred to as ‘NDPS Act’), in the case stemming from FIR No.69 dated 04.03.2005 registered under Section 18 of NDPS Act at Police Station Jagraon, District Ludhiana.
2. The appellant was sentenced for keeping in his possession 250 grams of Opium, as mentioned below:

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



3. Learned Counsel for the appellant submits that he is not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction dated 06.10.2008 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Ludhiana on merits and restricts his prayer to modification of the order on quantum of sentence dated 07.10.2008 to that of sentence already undergone by the appellant. As per the custody certificate, the appellant has undergone a period of 01 month and 05 days.

4. *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. Moreover, the appellant is involved in one more case.

5. 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 of NDPS Act. As per the custody certificate, the appellant has undergone a period of 01 month and 05 days, out of total sentence of six months, in the instant. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 18 of 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. Further, the primary consideration in matters where the petitioner/appellant is involved in other NDPS cases ought to be the severity of the offence. Moreover, Co-ordinate benches of this Court have deemed it appropriate to reduce the sentence imposed upon the accused to be the custody already undergone by them, in spite of their involvement in other cases pertaining to the NDPS Act in ***Pritam Singh @ Preeti vs. State of Punjab in CRA-S-1769-SB-2010*** decided on 03.04.2025, ***Ram Lal vs. State of Haryana in CRA-S-986-SB-2005*** decided on 11.05.2018, ***Raj Pal vs. State of***



Haryana in CRA-S-68-SB-2005 decided on 28.04.2023, Raj Pal vs. State of Haryana in CRA-S-34-SB-2005 decided on 28.04.2023 and Gurmail Singh and others vs. State of Punjab in CRA-S-1976-SB-2007 decided on 28.03.2025.

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 04.03.2005 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last more than 20 years. Since his conviction, he has grown into law-abiding citizen and desires to live a peaceful life.

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

(i) The judgment dated 06.10.2008 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Ludhiana is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 07.10.2008 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for six months 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.

May 05, 2025
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(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

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