

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH

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CRA-S-2219-SB-2007
Date of decision : 01.04.2025

Ram Phal

..... Appellant

VERSUS

State of Haryana.

..... Respondent

CORAM: HON’BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. Maneet Kaushik, Advocate, for the appellant.

Mr. Harkesh Singh, AAG, Haryana.

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 31.10.2007 and 01.11.2007 respectively passed by learned Additional Sessions Judge, Hissar, whereby, the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 20 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter ‘NDPS Act’), in the case stemming from FIR No.173 dated 22.06.2006, under Section 20/61/85 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Sadar, Hansi.
2. The appellant was convicted for keeping in possession 440 Grams of *Charas* and sentenced as mentioned below:

Offence	Sentence
Section 20 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of 03 years and to pay fine of Rs.5,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo rigorous imprisonment for 2 months.

3. Learned counsel for the appellant contends that he is not assailing



the impugned judgment of conviction dated 31.10.2007 on merits and restricts his prayer to modification of the order on quantum of sentence, to that of the sentence already undergone by the appellant, as he has already undergone a period of 8 months and 5 days in custody and is not involved in any other criminal activity.

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 and as such, he does not deserve any leniency.

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 440 Grams of *Charas*, i.e. intermediate quantity, attracting the offence of Section 20 NDPS Act, for which no minimum punishment has been prescribed. As per his custody certificate, he is not involved in any other case and has already undergone an actual sentence of 8 months and 05 days, in the instant case. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 20 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.

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. 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 22.06.2006 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last more than 18 years. Since his conviction, he has grown into a law-abiding citizen and desires to live a peaceful life.

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

(i) The judgment dated 31.10.2007 passed by the learned Additional Sessions Judge, Hissar, is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 01.11.2007 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 03 years and fine along with default mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.



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

(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

01.04.2025
anil

Whether speaking / reasoned Yes/No
Whether Reportable Yes/No