



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH
419

CRA-S-236-SB-2007 (O&M)
Date of decision: 10.03.2025

Sukhpal Singh @ Budhu

....Appellant

Versus

The State of Punjab

....Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Ms. Shivaly Singla, Advocate (*Amicus Curiae*)
for the appellant.

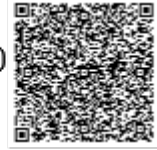
Mr. Rishabh Singla, AAG, Punjab.

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 24.01.2007 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Bathinda 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 'the NDPS Act'), in the case stemming from FIR No.25 dated 9.4.2004, under Section 15 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Maur.

2. The appellant was sentenced as mentioned below:

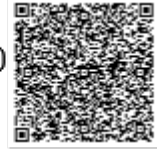
Offence	Sentence
Section 15(b) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of 01 year and 06 months and to pay fine of Rs.3,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo rigorous imprisonment for 15 days.



3. Brief facts of the case are that on 09.04.2004, a public man namely Roop Singh apprehended the accused/appellant while carrying a bag containing Poppy Husk on his head and thereafter, on seeing the police party headed by ASI Pal Singh, he threw the said bag on the ground and was apprehended at the spot. Thereafter, recovery of 20 Kgs of Poppy Husk was effected and two samples of 100 grams each were drawn from the bag and then sent to the chemical examiner for its examination and subsequently, FIR (*supra*) was registered under Section 15 of the NDPS Act.

4. Learned *amicus curiae* 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. She contends that the appellant has been convicted for keeping in possession 20 Kgs of Poppy Husk and the entire case of the prosecution is based on the testimonies of official witnesses and there are material improvements and contradictions in the deposition of the prosecution witnesses, which has been completely overlooked by the learned trial Court. Further the link evidence is completely missing in the instant case and although, the independent witness Roop Singh was joined in the investigation, however, he was not examined by the prosecution. Lastly, she submits that the appellant has already undergone a period of 03 months and 18 days in custody and is not involved in any other criminal case.

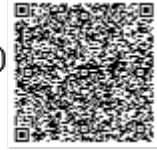
5. *Per contra*, learned State counsel opposes the prayer of the appellant on the ground that the learned Court below has passed a well-



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 20 kgs of Poppy Husk, i.e. intermediate quantity, attracting the offence of Section 15 the 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 03 months and 18 days out of total sentence of 01 year and 06 months, 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 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 Court below indicates no perversity in its findings and the same is based on correct appreciation of evidence available on record. However, the FIR (supra) was registered on 09.04.2004 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for the last about 21 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 of conviction dated 24.01.2007 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Bathinda is upheld.



(ii) The order of sentence dated 24.01.2007 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for a period of 01 year and 06 months and fine of Rs.3,000/- 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.
- 12. Pending miscellaneous application(s), if any, shall also stand disposed of.

(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

10.03.2025
yakub

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