

CRA-S-2412-SB-2007
Decided on:29.04.2025

.... Appellant

versus

.... Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. P.P.S.Duggal, 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 and order of sentence dated 05.09.2007 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Ferozepur whereby the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter referred to as 'NDPS Act'), in the case stemming from FIR No.194 dated 09.08.2002 registered under Section 15 of NDPS Act at Police Station Sadar Jallalabad.

2. The appellant was sentenced for keeping in his possession 20 kgs of poppy husk, as mentioned below:

Offence	Sentence
Section 15 of NDPS Act	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of two years and to pay fine of Rs.10,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo RI for three months.



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3. Brief facts of the case are that on 09.08.2002, a police party headed by ASI Ranjit Singh was on patrolling duty. When the police party reached near the bridge of canal minor of village Khundwala, they saw the appellant coming from the side of village Bandiwala on a moped while carrying a plastic bag on his legs. On being signalled to stop, the search of the appellant was conducted, who reposed his confidence in ASI Ranjit Singh and 20 kgs of contraband was recovered from the bag of the appellant. Two samples of 200 grams were drawn from the bag and sent to the chemical examiner for its examination and subsequently, FIR (*supra*) was registered under Section 15 of the NDPS Act.

4. Learned Counsel for the appellant submits that he is not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction dated 05.09.2007 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Ferozepur on merits and restricts his prayer to modification of the order on quantum of sentence dated 05.09.2007 to that of sentence already undergone by the appellant. As per the custody certificate, the appellant has undergone a period of 09 months and 17 days.

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. He further submits that the appellant is a habitual offender and is involved in other criminal cases under the NDPS Act and 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, which falls under the purview of Section 15 of NDPS Act. As per the custody certificate, the appellant has undergone a period of 09 months and 17 days out of total



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sentence of two years in the instant case. Although learned State counsel submits that the appellant is involved in other criminal cases registered under the NDPS Act, however, he could not controvert the fact that the appellant has either undergone the sentences or acquitted in those cases. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 15 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.

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



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strike a balance between the efficacy of law and the chances of reformation of the accused.

9. Further, the primary consideration in matters where the appellant is involved in other NDPS cases ought to be the severity of the offence. Moreover, the Coordinate Benches of this Court have deemed it appropriate to reduce the sentence imposed upon the accused to be the custody already undergone by him, in spite of his 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.

10. 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 09.08.2002 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for the last more than 22 years. Since his conviction, he has grown into law-abiding citizen and desires to live a peaceful life.

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

(i) The judgment dated 05.09.2007 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Ferozepur is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 05.09.2007 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for two years and fine of Rs.10,000/- along with default mechanism awarded to



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the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.

12. Pending miscellaneous applications, if any, shall also stand disposed of.

29.04.2025
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(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/non-speaking?
Whether reportable?

Yes/No
Yes/No