

1156-2

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRA-S-2342-SB-2008

Date of decision: 06.05.2025

Surinder Singh @ Chhindi

....Appellant

Versus

State of Haryana

...Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Ms. Shivani Jaglan, Advocate for
Mr. Pratap Singh Gill, Advocate
for the appellant.

Mr. Harkesh Kumar, 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 22.11.2008 passed by learned Special Judge, Ambala, whereby, the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter ‘NDPS Act’), in the case stemming from FIR No.77 dated 17.04.2002, under Sections 15 & 18 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Parao.
2. The appellant was convicted for keeping in possession 14 kg of poppy husk and 01 kg of *opium* and sentenced as mentioned below:

Offence	Sentence
Section 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of 02 years and to pay fine of Rs.10,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo imprisonment for 02 months.
Section 18 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of 02 years and to pay fine of Rs.10,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo imprisonment for 02 months.



Both the sentences were ordered to run concurrently.

3. Learned counsel for the appellant *inter alia* contends that the learned Court below has fallen into grave error in convicting appellant, as his guilt has not been proved beyond reasonable doubt. It is contended that no independent witness was joined in the investigation. There is non-compliance of the mandatory provisions of the NDPS Act. The Investigating Officer had taken only two samples from the recovered poppy husk and the prosecution is silent about taking of samples from the remaining 34 packets which creates serious doubt on the case set up by the prosecution. The link evidence is also missing in the present case and the prosecution has failed to connect appellant with the conscious possession of the contraband. There are also discrepancies in the testimonies of the official witnesses. Further, she is not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction on merits and restricts her 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 an actual period of 02 years 06 months and 29 days in custody and he is involved in one more case under the NDPS Act.

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. He further submits that the appellant is also involved in one more case under the NDPS Act 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

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for being in possession of 14 kg of poppy husk and 01 kg of *opium*, i.e. intermediate quantity, attracting the offence of Sections 15 & 18 of NDPS Act, for which no minimum punishment has been prescribed. As per his custody certificate, appellant has already undergone an actual period of 02 years 06 months and 29 days out of total sentence of 02 years, in the instant case. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Sections 15 & 18 of the 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. 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.

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 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 17.04.2002 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for about 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:-

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(i) The judgment dated 22.11.2008 passed by the learned Special Judge, Ambala, is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 22.11.2008 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 02 years and 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

06.05.2025*Neha*

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