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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRA-S-715-SB-2007
Date of decision: 18.03.2025

MANJIT SINGH ALIAS MUKKA

V/S

...APPELLANT

STATE OF PUNJAB

...RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON’BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. Ashish Grover, 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 19.03.2007 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Bathinda, whereby the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 18(C) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter referred to as the ‘NDPS Act’), in the case stemming from FIR No.52 dated 03.05.2004, under Section 18 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Sangat.
2. The appellant was sentenced as mentioned below:

Offence	Sentence
Section 18(C) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of nine months and to pay fine of Rs.2,500/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo rigorous imprisonment for three months.



3. Brief facts of the case are that on 03.05.2004, a police party headed by SHO Balwinder Singh was holding picket in revenue limits of village Gurthari on road leading to Refinery, they saw a bus was coming from the side of Dabwali. From the bus, the passengers were alighted. The accused tried to run away but was apprehended, while holding carry bag in his right hand. Upon search of bag, 500 grams of Opium wrapped in glazed paper was recovered from him. 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 19.03.2007 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Bathinda on merits and restricts his prayer to modification of the order on quantum of sentence of even date i.e. 19.03.2007 to that of sentence already undergone by the appellant as he has already undergone a total custody period of 02 months and 07 days and he is not involved in any other case.

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 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 500 grams of Opium, which falls under the purview of Section 18 NDPS Act. As per custody certificate, the appellant is not involved in any other case and has already undergone an actual sentence of 02 months and 07 days out of total sentence of 09 months, in the instant case. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 18



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 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 03.05.2004 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for 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 dated 19.03.2007 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Bathinda is upheld.
- (ii) The order of sentence dated 19.03.2007 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 09 months and a fine of Rs.2,500/- along with default mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.

March 18, 2025
manisha

(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

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