



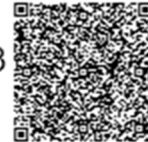
CRA-S-888-SB-2008

3. Learned Counsel for the appellant submits that he is not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction dated 02.05.2008 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Barnala on merits and restricts his prayer to modification of the order on quantum of sentence dated 02.05.2008 to that of sentence already undergone by the appellant. As per the custody certificate, the appellant has undergone a period of 02 months and 25 days.

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 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 for being in possession of 35 grams of opium, which falls under the purview of Section 18 of NDPS Act. As per the custody certificate, the appellant has undergone a period of 02 months and 25 days out of total sentence of 06 months, in the instant case and is involved in one more case under the NDPS Act. Learned State counsel has, however not controverted the fact that the appellant was convicted in a case under the NDPS Act involving small quantity of the contraband. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 18 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.

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



CRA-S-888-SB-2008

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 24.07.2004 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last more than 20 years. Since his conviction, he has grown into law-abiding citizen and desires to live a peaceful life.

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

- (i) The judgment dated 02.05.2008 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Barnala is upheld.



CRA-S-888-SB-2008

(ii) The order of sentence dated 02.05.2008 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for six months and fine of Rs.500/- along with default mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.

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

24.04.2025
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(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

Whether speaking/non-speaking?	Yes/No
Whether reportable?	Yes/No