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IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

CRA-S-1686-SB-2010
Date of decision: 25.03.2025

MALKIAT SINGH

...APPELLANT

V/S

STATE OF PUNJAB

...RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON’BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. P.S. Dhaliwal, Advocate
for the appellant.

Mr. Sandeep Kumar, DAG, 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 12.07.2010 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Barnala 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.17 dated 18.03.2008 registered under Section 15 of NDPS Act at Police Station Barnala.
2. The appellant was sentenced as mentioned below:

Offence	Sentence
Section 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of two years and to pay fine of Rs.1,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo RI for three months.



3. Brief facts of the case are that on 18.03.2008, when ASI Baljit Singh along with other police officials, was proceeding from link road Hamidi towards village Thuliwal, in connection with patrolling and reached near the brick kiln on link road, Kaka Singh met them and requested them to take left to village Thuliwal. At about 2:00 PM, when the police party was one and half kilometers away from village Thuliwal, appellant was seen sitting on plastic bag. On seeing the police, he turned his face backwards. On suspicion, he was apprehended. Upon search of plastic bag, 25 kgs of Poppy Husk was recovered. 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 12.07.2010 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Barnala on merits and restricts his prayer to modification of the order on quantum of sentence dated 12.07.2010 to that of sentence already undergone by the appellant. As per his custody certificate, the appellant has undergone actual custody period of 03 months and 14 days, out of total sentence of two years.

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. He further submits that the appellant has been convicted in one more case under Section 15 of the NDPS Act.

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 25 kgs of poppy husk, which falls under



the purview of Section 15 NDPS Act. As per his custody certificate, the appellant has undergone actual custody period of 03 months and 14 days, out of total sentence of two years, in the instant case. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 15 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 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 18.03.2008 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last 17 years. Since his conviction, he has grown into law-abiding citizen and desires to live a peaceful life.

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

(i) The judgment dated 12.07.2010 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Barnala is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence of even date 12.07.2010 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for two years and fine of Rs.1,000/- along with default mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.

March 25, 2025
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(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

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