

IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA

AT CHANDIGARH

CRA-S-1875-SB-2010 (O&M)

Date of Decision: 03.04.2025

SURJIT SINGH @ BITTU

...APPELLANT

Versus

STATE OF PUNJAB

...RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. D.S. Gill, Advocate
for the appellant.

Mr. Nitesh Sharma, DAG Punjab.

Harpreet Singh Brar, J. (Oral)

1. The prayer in the present appeal is to set aside the judgment of conviction and order on quantum of sentence dated 21.07.2010 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Muktsar, whereby the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 18 of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter to be referred as 'NDPS Act') in the case stemming from FIR No. 161 dated 30.05.2005 registered at Police Station Gidderbaha.

2. The appellant was sentenced for being in his possession 1000 grams opium, as mentioned below:

Offence under Section	Sentence	Fine	Sentence in default of payment of fine
18 of NDPS Act	Rigorous imprisonment for 01 year	Rs. 5,000/-	Rigorous imprisonment for 01 month

3. Learned Counsel for the appellant submits that he is not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction dated 21.07.2010 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Muktsar on merits and restricts his prayer to modification of the order on quantum of sentence dated 21.07.2010 to that of sentence already

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undergone by the appellant as he has already undergone a period of 04 months and 27 days out of total sentence of 01 year imposed upon him and he is not involved in any other case.

4. Per contra, learned State counsel opposes the prayer of the appellant on the ground that learned trial Court has passed a well-reasoned judgment based on correct appreciation of evidence available on record and as such, the appellant 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 1000 grams of opium, attracting the offence under Section 18 of NDPS Act, for which no minimum punishment has been prescribed. As per his custody certificate, he is not involved in any other case and has already undergone an actual sentence of 04 months and 27 days out of total sentence of 01 year, in the instant case. Moreover, learned counsel for the appellant has not assailed the judgment of conviction on merits. Rather, he has restricted his prayer only qua modification of order on quantum of sentence. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 18 of 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. In **Deo Narain Mandal v. State of UP (2004) 7 SCC 257**, a three Judge bench of 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

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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, a two Judge Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in **Ravada Sasikala v. 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 said judgment is based on correct appreciation of evidence available on record. However, the FIR (supra) was lodged on 30.05.2005 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last more than 19 years.

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

(i) The judgment dated 21.07.2010 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Muktsar is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 21.07.2010 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 01 year

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and fine of Rs. 5,000/- with default mechanism awarded to the
appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by
him.

10. Pending miscellaneous application(s), if any, shall also stand
disposed of.

(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)

JUDGE

03.04.2025

Ajay Goswami

Whether speaking/reasoned

Whether reportable

Yes/No

Yes/No