



IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA AT
CHANDIGARH

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Date of decision: 19.05.2025

1. CRA-S-914-SB-2005 (O&M)

Balwant Singh		Appellant
	Versus	
State of Punjab		Respondent

2. CRA-S-985-SB-2005 (O&M)

Gurcharan Singh		Appellant
	Versus	
State of Punjab		Respondent

3. CRA-S-1547-SB-2005 (O&M)

Beant Singh		Appellant
	Versus	
State of Punjab		Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. Ashish Grover, Advocate
for the appellant in CRA-S-914-SB-2005.

Mr. S.S. Sidhu, Advocate
for the appellant(s)
in CRA-S Nos.985-SB and No.1547-SB of 2005.

Mr. Rishabh Singla, AAG, Punjab.

HARPREET SINGH BRAR J. (Oral)

1. Vide this common order, I intend to dispose of CRA-S
Nos.914-SB, No.985-SB and No.1547-SB of 2005, as common



questions of law and facts are involved for adjudication. For the sake of convenience, facts are taken from CRA-S-914-SB-2005.

2. Prayer in all these appeals is to set-aside the judgment of conviction and order of sentence dated 27.04.2005 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Bathinda whereby the appellant(s) were convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter ‘the NDPS Act’), in the case stemming from FIR No.50 dated 25.06.2001 registered under Section 15 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Dialpura.

2.1 The appellants were found in possession 40 Kgs of Poppy Husk, for which they were convicted and sentenced as follows:

Offence	Sentence
Section 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of 05 years each and to pay fine of Rs.5,000/- each and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo rigorous imprisonment for 06 months each.

3. Learned counsel for the appellant(s) contends that they are not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction dated 27.04.2005 on merits and restricts the prayer qua modification of the order on quantum of sentence, to that of the sentence already undergone by the appellants, as appellant No.1 – Balwant Singh has already undergone a period of 03 years, 09 months and 03 days, appellant No.2 – Gurcharan Singh, has already undergone a period of 06 months and 10 days and appellant



No.3 – Beant Singh has already undergone a period of 01 year, 05 months and 08 days.

4. *Per contra*, learned State counsel opposes the prayer of the appellant(s) on the ground that the learned Court below has passed a well-reasoned judgment based on correct appreciation of evidence available on record and appellants namely Balwant Singh and Gurcharan Singh are involved in other cases also, as such, the appellant(s) do 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 appellants were convicted for keeping in possession 40 Kgs of Poppy Husk, i.e. intermediate quantity, attracting the offence of Section 15 of the NDPS Act, for which no minimum punishment has been prescribed. As per custody certificates, appellant No.1 – Balwant Singh has already undergone a period of 03 years, 09 months and 03 days, appellant No.2 – Gurcharan Singh, has already undergone a period of 06 months and 10 days and appellant No.3 – Beant Singh has already undergone a period of 01 year, 05 months and 08 days out of total sentence of 05 years each, in the instant case. Since there was no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 15 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 appellants is reduced to the period already undergone by them.



6. In ***Deo Narain Mandal Vs. 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, the 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, a two-Judge Bench of 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 conduct of the accused to strike a balance between the efficacy of law and the chances of reformation of the accused.



7.1. Further, the primary consideration in matters where the appellant is involved in other NDPS cases ought to be the severity of the offence. Moreover, the 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.

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. Learned counsel for the appellant(s) have not assailed the judgment of conviction on merits, rather restricted the prayer only qua modification of quantum of sentence to that of the sentence already undergone by the appellant(s).

9. The FIR in the present case was registered on 25.06.2001 and the appellants are suffering the agony of trial since the last more than 23 years. Since the conviction, the appellants have grown into a law-abiding citizen and desire to live a peaceful life.



10. Consequently, the present appeal is disposed of in the following terms:-

- (i) The judgment of conviction dated 27.04.2005 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Bathinda is upheld.*
- (ii) The order of sentence is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for a period of 05 years each and fine along with default mechanism awarded to all the appellants is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by them.*

11. All the pending miscellaneous application(s), if any, shall also stand disposed of.

12. A photocopy of this order be placed on the file of other connected cases.

(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

19.05.2025

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Whether speaking/reasoned: Yes/No

Whether reportable: Yes/No