



523 **IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

**CRA-S-928-SB-2007
Date of decision: 21.03.2025**

BOOTA SINGH

...APPELLANT

V/S

STATE OF HARYANA

...RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. Gursahib Singh Hundal, Advocate
for the appellant (*amicus curiae*).

Mr. Harkesh Kumar, AAG, Haryana.

HARPREET SINGH BRAR, J. (ORAL)

1. The prayer in the present appeal is to set aside the judgment of conviction dated 01.05.2007 and order of sentence dated 02.05.2007 passed by learned Sessions Judge, Sirsa, whereby the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter 'NDPS Act'), in the case stemming from FIR No.1198 dated 20.09.2003, under Section 15 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Kalanwali.

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.5,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo simple imprisonment for three months.

3. Brief facts of the case are that on 20.09.2003, ASI Balwan Singh along with other police officials was present at Kainchi Chowk, in the area of



village Singhpura, in connection with patrolling, when they saw the appellant, carrying a plastic bag, came from the side of village Jogewala. On suspicion, he was apprehended. Upon search of plastic bag, 09 kgs of Poppy Straw i.e. *Choorā Post* was recovered. Subsequently, FIR (*supra*) was registered under Section 15 of the NDPS Act.

4. Learned *amicus curiae* for the appellant *inter alia* contends that the appellant has been convicted for being in possession of 9 kgs. of poppy straw. He further contends that the appellant has been falsely implicated in the present case, at the behest of the *Sarpanch* of the village, who was inimical towards him. Furthermore, independent witness, namely, Ram Chander, who was joined in the investigation, was not examined. He submits that there are discrepancies in the number of seals and the initials. Further, there is a delay in sending representative samples to forensic science laboratory. Lastly, he submits that the appellant has already undergone total custody period of 03 months and 21 days and is not involved in any other criminal 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 09 kgs. of Poppy Straw, which falls under the purview of Section 15 NDPS Act. As per his custody certificate, he is not involved in any other case and has already undergone an actual sentence of 03 months and 21 days out of total sentence of 02 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 20.09.2003 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last more than 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, both the appeals are disposed of in the following terms:-

(i) The judgment dated 01.05.2007 passed by the learned Sessions Judge, Sirsa is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 02.05.2007 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 02 years and fine of Rs.5,000/- along with default mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.

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

12. The High Court Legal Services Authority is directed to pay remuneration to the learned *Amicus Curiae* as per rules.

March 21, 2025
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(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

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