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**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB & HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

**CRA-S-1694-SB-2010 (O&M)
Date of Decision: 27.03.2025**

BUTA SINGH

...APPELLANT

Versus

STATE OF PUNJAB

...RESPONDENT

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Ms. Kirandeep Kaur, Advocate
and Mr. Rajesh Girdhar, Advocate for the appellant.

Mr. Subhash Godara, Addl. A.G., Punjab.

Harpreet Singh Brar, J. (Oral)

1. Present appeal has been preferred by the appellant against the judgment of conviction and order on quantum of sentence dated 15.07.2010 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Muktsar vide which the appellant has been convicted and sentenced as mentioned below:

Offence under Section	Sentence	Fine	Sentence in default of payment of fine
15 of NDPS Act	Rigorous imprisonment for two years	Rs. 2,000/-	Rigorous imprisonment for three months

2. Briefly stated, the facts of the prosecution case are that on 15.06.2004, a police party headed by ASI Banta Singh alongwith other police officials, on a government vehicle, were going from the side of village, Shekhu, Jandwala towards village Danewala in connection with patrolling duty. When the police party reached near Shri Gurudwara Sahib situated in the area of village, Danewala, one person was found coming on a scooter loading one gunny bag from the side of village Danewala, who was signalled to stop. On seeing the police party, he stopped the scooter and tried to turn back, but gunny bag placed on the back seat of scooter, fell down on the ground and some poppy

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husk scattered on the ground. Identity of the accused-appellant was verified. On checking, the gunny bag was found to be containing poppy husk. One sample weighing 250 grams was separated from the bulk and remaining on weighment came to be 19.750 kilograms. Separate parcels of the sample as well as remaining bulk of the poppy husk were prepared, which were sealed. FIR(*supra*) was registered under Sections 15 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter to be referred as 'NDPS Act').

3. Learned Counsel for the petitioner submits that he is not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction dated 15.07.2010 passed by learned, Judge, Special Court, Muktsar on merits and restricts his prayer to modification of the order on quantum of sentence dated 15.07.2010 to that of sentence already undergone by the appellant as he has already undergone a period of 01 month and 22 days out of total sentence of 02 years imposed upon him.

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 20 kilogram of poppy husk, attracting the offence under Section 15 of NDPS Act, for which no minimum punishment has been prescribed. As per her custody certificate, he is not involved in any other case and he has already undergone an actual sentence of 01 month and 22 days out of total sentence of 02 years, 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.

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Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 15 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 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.

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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 15.06.2004 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial for last more than 20 years. Since his conviction, the appellant has reformed into a law-abiding citizen and intends to live a peaceful life.

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

(i) The judgment dated 15.07.2010 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Muktsar is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 15.07.2010 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 02 years and fine of Rs. 2,000/- 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

27.03.2025*Ajay Goswami**Whether speaking/reasoned*
*Whether reportable**Yes/No*
Yes/No