



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

265

CRA-S No.1789-SB-2012 (O&amp;M)

Date of decision: 24.04.2025

Harbhajan Singh

....Appellant

Versus

State of Punjab

....Respondent

**CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR**

**Present:** Mr. Hareesh Kumar, Advocate  
for Mr. H.S. Sullar, Advocate  
for the appellant.

Mr. Subhash Godara, Addl. A.G., 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 16.05.2012 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Patiala whereby the appellant was convicted and sentenced for the offence punishable under Section 18 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (hereinafter 'the NDPS Act'), in the case stemming from FIR No.80 dated 25.06.2010 registered under Section 18 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Julkan, District Patiala.

2. The appellant was found in possession 200 grams of Opium, for which he was convicted and sentenced as follows:

Offence	Sentence
Section 18 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of 09 months and to pay fine of Rs.1,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo rigorous imprisonment for 01 month.



3. Learned counsel for the appellant contends that he is not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction dated 16.05.2012 on merits and restricts his prayer qua modification of the order on quantum of sentence, to that of the sentence already undergone by the appellant, as he has already undergone a period of 04 months and 05 days.

4. *Per contra*, learned State counsel opposes the prayer of the appellant on the ground that the learned Court below has passed a well-reasoned judgment based on correct appreciation of evidence available on record and the appellant is involved in other cases of similar nature 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 200 grams of Opium, i.e. intermediate quantity, attracting the offence of Section 18 of the NDPS Act, for which no minimum punishment has been prescribed. As per custody certificate, the appellant has already undergone an actual sentence of 04 months and 05 days out of total sentence of 09 months, in the instant case. Since there is no minimum punishment prescribed under Section 18 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 appellant is reduced to the period already undergone by him.

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 has 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.

9. The FIR in the present case was registered on 25.06.2010 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial since the last more than 14 years. Since his conviction, the appellant has grown into a law-abiding citizen and desires to live a peaceful life.

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

***(i) The judgment of conviction dated 16.05.2012 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Patiala is upheld.***

***(ii) The order of sentence of even date is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for a period of 09 months and fine along with default***



*mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.*

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

**(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)**  
**JUDGE**

**24.04.2025**

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Whether speaking/reasoned: Yes/No

Whether reportable: Yes/No