



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

201

CRA-S-2347-SB-2009 (O&M)

Date of decision: 02.04.2025

Sarabjit Singh

....Appellant

Versus

State of Punjab

....Respondent

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR

Present: Mr. Iqbal Singh Mann, Advocate
for the appellant.

Mr. Sandeep Kumar, DAG, Punjab.

HARPREET SINGH BRAR J. (Oral)

1. The prayer in the present appeal is to set-aside the judgment of conviction dated 15.09.2009 and order of sentence dated 18.09.2009 passed by learned Judge, Special Court, Muktsar 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.129 dated 10.06.2003 registered under Section 18 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Lambi.

2. The appellant was convicted for keeping in possession 250 grams of Opium, and sentenced as mentioned below:

Offence	Sentence
Section 18 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985	Rigorous imprisonment for a period of 01 year and to pay fine of Rs.10,000/- and in default of payment of fine, to further undergo rigorous imprisonment



	for 03 months.
--	----------------

3. Learned counsel for the appellant contends that he is not assailing the impugned judgment of conviction dated 15.09.2009 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 23 days and is not involved in any other criminal activity.

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 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 250 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 is not involved in any other case and has already undergone an actual sentence of 04 months and 23 days out of total sentence of 01 year, 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. 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. 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.

8. The FIR in the present case was registered on 10.06.2003 and the appellant has been suffering the agony of trial since the last more than 21 years and 09 months. Since his conviction, the appellant has grown into a law-abiding citizen and desires to live a peaceful life.

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

(i) The judgment of conviction dated 15.09.2009 passed by the learned Judge, Special Court, Muktsar is upheld.

(ii) The order of sentence dated 18.09.2009 is modified to the extent that the sentence of rigorous imprisonment for a period of 01 year and fine of Rs.10,000/- along with default mechanism awarded to the appellant is reduced to the period of sentence already undergone by him.

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

**(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE**

02.04.2025

yakub

Whether speaking/reasoned: Yes/No

Whether reportable: Yes/No