

IN THE HIGH COURT OF GUJARAT AT AHMEDABAD**R/CRIMINAL APPEAL (AGAINST ACQUITTAL) NO. 1638 of 2013****With****R/CRIMINAL APPEAL NO. 734 of 2014****FOR APPROVAL AND SIGNATURE:****HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE HEMANT M. PRACHCHHAK**

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Approved for Reporting	Yes	No

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STATE OF GUJARAT

Versus

PATHAN FAKRUDIN KALU BASHIRKHAN & ORS.

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Appearance:

MS JYOTI BHATT ADDITIONAL PUBLIC PROSECUTOR for the Appellant(s)

No. 1

MR PRATIK B BAROT(3711) for the Opponent(s)/Respondent(s) No.

1,2,3,4,5,6

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**CORAM: HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE HEMANT M.
PRACHCHHAK****Date : 24/08/2026****JUDGMENT**

1. Both the appeals arise from the same FIR registered at Mehsana Taluka Police Station and from the same incident. Therefore, both the present appeals are decided through this common judgment.

2. The appellant - State of Gujarat has preferred this appeal under Section 378(1)(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 against the judgment and order dated 31.07.2013 passed by the learned Additional Sessions Judge, Mehsana (hereinafter be referred to as "the trial Court") in Sessions Case No.39 of 2012, whereby the trial Court has acquitted the original accused (respondents herein) from the

offences punishable under Sections 498A, 306 and 114 of the Indian Penal Code (hereinafter referred to as “IPC”) and Sections 3 and 7 of the Dowry Prohibition Act (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”).

3. Short facts of the prosecution case are that the complainant - Nasrullakhan Nannamiya Pathan, father of deceased Shabanaben, registered a complaint against present accused with Mehsana Taluka Police Station, which was registered as I.C.R.NO.219 of 2011 for the offences punishable under Sections 498 (A), 306 and 114 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 3 and 7 of the Dowry Prohibition Act. That, on 04.06.2005, marriage of daughter of the complainant viz. Shabanabibi was solemnized with accused no.1-Fakrudin Pathan and after marriage, she was residing at her matrimonial home with accused persons in joint family. That, in the year 2006, she was subjected to physical harassment and therefore, she went to Patan at her parental home, however, after settling matters, she returned back to her matrimonial home. That, the accused again taunted the deceased about lack of dowry and how she had been unable to bear children and accused no.6, Hanifabibi had also subjected the deceased to mental torture. That, in the year-2009, the accused persons asked the deceased to bring Rs.50,000/- from her father's home. That, the deceased's father gave her Rs.50,000/- as asked but accused continued to cause physical and mental harassment to the deceased. That, the deceased being frustrated with the harassment committed suicide by hanging herself from a fan. Hence, a complaint was lodged by the complainant before Mehsana Taluka Police Station for the aforesaid offences. On completion of investigation, charge sheet was submitted into the Court of learned J.M.F.C., Mehsana.

3.1 The charge against the accused came to be framed by the trial

Court for the aforesaid offences against the accused. On being explained it to them, the accused have denied having committed any offence. The accused pleaded not guilty to the charge and pleaded for trial and hence, the case was tried by the learned Additional Sessions Judge, Mehsana.

4. It appears from the records that to prove the case, the prosecution has examined 17 witnesses and also produced 34 documentary evidences.

5. After closure of the evidence, the statements of the accused under section 313 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 have been recorded wherein they denied of having committed any offence and have stated that they are innocent.

6. After hearing both sides and considering the evidence on records, the trial Court by impugned judgment and order has acquitted the accused from all the charges levelled against them.

7. Being aggrieved and dissatisfied with the aforesaid judgment and order of acquittal the appellant – State of Gujarat has preferred these appeals.

8. Heard Ms. Jyoti Bhatt, learned Additional Public Prosecutor for the appellant – State of Gujarat and Mr. Pratik Barot, learned counsel for the respondents – accused at length.

9. Ms. Bhatt, learned Additional Public Prosecutor appearing for the appellant – State of Gujarat has submitted the same facts which are narrated in the memo of appeal and has also submitted that the

prosecution has examined witnesses and produced documentary evidence, despite this fact, the trial Court has not considered the same in its true and proper perspective in passing the judgment and order of acquittal. Ms. Bhatt, learned Additional Public Prosecutor, while referring to the entire oral as well as documentary evidence, has assailed the impugned judgment and order and submitted that the trial Court has not taken into consideration the evidence connecting the accused to the alleged offence in its proper perspective and even the prosecution has been able to prove the charges levelled against the accused. She has submitted that a vital piece of evidence, namely, the letter written by the deceased, specifically mentioned that all the present respondents in both the appeals were responsible for the incident of suicide and that they should be punished for the said incident. However, this vital piece of evidence was not properly appreciated by the trial Court while passing the impugned judgment and order. She has submitted that the prosecution witnesses had categorically stated before the trial Court, with regard to the role attributable to each of the accused regarding the ill-treatment and harassment caused to the deceased, and the same had been stated in detail in their depositions. However, the trial Court failed to properly appreciate the evidence led by the prosecution. She has further contended that since the death of the deceased had occurred within a period of seven years of her marriage, the trial Court ought to have drawn the presumptions under Sections 113A and 113B of the Indian Evidence Act against the respondents. She has submitted that the witnesses have fully supported the case of the prosecution, however, the trial Court has not appreciated the same and passed the judgment and order of acquittal which is illegal and unjust. She has submitted that it is settled legal position that the evidence of a single witness is sufficient

for conviction if the same is reliable and trustworthy and in the present case, though the evidence of all the witnesses are reliable and trustworthy, without any cogent reason, the trial Court has disbelieved and discarded the evidence of the witnesses.

9.1 According to Ms. Bhatt, learned Additional Public Prosecutor, the trial Court ought to have convicted the accused and ought to have imposed necessary sentence. She has prayed to allow the present appeals and to quash and set aside the impugned judgments and orders of acquittal.

10. Per contra, Mr. Barot, learned counsel for the respondents - accused has supported the impugned judgments and orders and has submitted that the trial Court has not committed any error of law and fact in acquitting the accused from the charges levelled against them. He has submitted that the ingredients of the offence alleged against the accused are not proved beyond reasonable doubt and, therefore, the trial Court has rightly acquitted the accused as the complainant has failed to prove the charge levelled against the accused. He has also submitted that there is no iota of evidence to connect the accused with the alleged crime in question.

10.1 Mr. Barot, learned counsel has submitted that, from the evidence of the independent witness, PW-6, Gadhvi Vasantiben Vijaydan Jethidan, who was a neighbour of the deceased and had reached the place of the incident first in point of time as a chance witness, had found that the deceased had hanged herself. Thereafter, she immediately called another neighbour, Gohil Vinodbhai Karshanbhai, who was examined by the prosecution as PW-7. He has submitted that it clearly transpires from their evidences that they had

never heard any quarrel between the husband and wife. He has submitted that it was further revealed from the evidence of these witnesses that only the deceased and her husband were residing in the said quarter and that no other family members were residing at the said address, as all of them were residing at different places. He has submitted that in light of these facts, the allegations made against the other respondents-accused are not supported by the evidence of these independent witnesses, and no specific role was attributed to them. Therefore, under such circumstances, the prosecution failed to establish the charges against the respondents-accused.

10.2 Mr. Barot, learned counsel has further contended that so far as the allegation regarding the demand of Rs.50,000/- by the respondents-accused is concerned, there was no satisfactory explanation given by the complainant in his evidence as to on which date, at what time, and to whom he had handed over the said amount of Rs.50,000/- and when the complainant was questioned by the defence, he did not give any satisfactory answer to the said questions. He has contended that as the amount, if any, was not paid at the time of the marriage, it could not be said to constitute dowry. He has submitted that the alleged payment of Rs. 50,000/- was not proved by the complainant through his evidence, nor did he produce any documentary evidence to establish that he had paid the said amount and therefore, the charges under Sections 3 and 7 of the Dowry Prohibition Act were rightly disbelieved by the trial Court.

10.3 Mr. Barot, learned counsel has submitted that from the evidence of the Investigating Officer, particularly during his cross-examination, it was admitted before the trial Court that, during the

course of the investigation, no evidence was found to show that, for more than one month prior to the incident, any of the accused had visited the house of the deceased. He has further submitted that from the evidence it is revealed that the accused-Fakrudin Pathan, for more than five days prior to the incident, had remained present at the hospital at Mehsana, as his father was admitted there and the accused-Fakrudin Pathan visited his house only for the purpose of taking bath and changing his clothes. He has submitted that during the last five days, there was not even a remote allegation of harassment at the hands of respondent No. 1, supported by any cogent evidence produced by the prosecution and thus, the trial Court has rightly passed the impugned judgment and order. He has prayed to confirm the impugned judgments and dismiss the present appeals.

11. I have heard the learned counsel for the respective parties and perused the materials on record. On perusal of the impugned judgment and order of acquittal passed by the trial Court, the questions that arise for determination are as under:-

- (1) whether the trial Court has rightly justified in passing the judgment and order of acquittal;
- (2) whether the trial Court has rightly appreciated the evidence led by the prosecution in recording the reasons;
- (3) whether there is any illegality, irregularity and perversity in the impugned judgment and order of acquittal;
- (4) whether the prosecution proved beyond reasonable doubt that the letter was written by the deceased;
- (5) whether the prosecution proved beyond reasonable doubt the charge regarding the payment of Rs.50,000/- by the complainant to the respondents-accused;

- (6) whether the prosecution proved the charges under Sections 498A, 306 and 114 of the IPC, and whether the trial court failed to draw the statutory presumptions under Sections 113A and 113B of the Indian Evidence Act against the respondents-accused;

12. On perusal of the records it appears that accused-Fakrudin Pathan, married the daughter of the complainant on 04.06.2005, i.e., approximately six years prior to the date of the incident. It appears that a Sata marriage had taken place, the sister-in-law of the deceased, namely, Merajbibi Pathan, was married to the brother of the deceased, Vasim Khan Nasrulakhan, and their marriage took place on 05.06.2005. It appears that on 23.11.2011, the complainant along with his wife and daughter-in-law-Merajbibi, visited the hospital at Mehsana on account of the illness of accused-Pathan Bashirkhan Hasamkhan, who was the father of respondent No. 1 and who was operated upon at the hospital, and therefore, respondent No. 1, along with his brother, was present at the hospital to take care of his ailing father. Thereafter, on 25.11.2011, it was alleged that the deceased made a telephone call to her father regarding the taunting and ill-treatment allegedly meted out to her by her sister-in-law - Merajbibi. However, it appears that there is no evidence produced by the prosecution to establish that the deceased had made any telephone call to her father on the 25.11.2011. No telephone call details or other corresponding evidence have been brought on record by the prosecution. It appears that on 25.11.2011, on account of the altercation with her sister-in-law, the deceased committed suicide by hanging herself. It appears that this information was immediately conveyed to the complainant and his family members, who

immediately reached the place of the incident and in their presence, the inquest panchnama and the statements of the witnesses, as well as the panchnama of the scene of offence, were recorded. Initially, the case was registered as an accidental death, being entry No. 38 of 2011, before the concerned police station, and the investigation was thereafter proceeded with. It appears that during the course of the inquest proceedings conducted by the Executive Magistrate in the presence of independent panch witnesses, the so-called letter written by the deceased was not found on the body of the deceased. The body of the deceased was examined in the presence of independent witnesses, including an examination of her private parts, but no such letter was found at that time. It is further revealed that the dead body of the deceased was taken to the hospital in a private car of the complainant. Therefore, there is every possibility that during such transit, the said letter was placed on or in the body of the deceased. Consequently, when the body reached the hospital, the doctor allegedly recovered the said letter from the dead body. Therefore, the trial Court has rightly discarded this piece of evidence, even the independent witnesses did not support the case that the said letter was found from the body of the deceased. This also includes the evidence of the Executive Magistrate, who is a completely independent witness, as well as the Investigating Officer, who had initially investigated the accidental death entry.

13. So far as the allegation regarding the advancement of a sum of Rs.50,000/- to the respondents-accused is concerned, PW-1 - Nasrullakhan Nannamiya Pathan was cross-examined at length by the defence, but he failed to explain the said allegation. It appears that the alleged payment of Rs.50,000/- was not proved by the complainant through his evidence, nor did he produce any

documentary evidence to establish that he had paid the said amount. Therefore, the alleged advancement of Rs.50,000/- to the respondents was also not proved by the prosecution beyond reasonable doubt. It is further revealed from the evidence of the prosecution witnesses that, during the six-year span of the marriage, the deceased twice went to her parental home and resided there for approximately 18 months on one occasion and for one year on the other occasion and it also appears that her sister-in-law had also not come to the matrimonial home, i.e., the complainant's home. It appears that the elders and family members had intervened in the alleged dispute between the respondents and the deceased and the matter was settled internally and after the persuasion of the elders, the deceased was again sent back to her matrimonial home. It appears that during the course of investigation, it was revealed that, for one month prior to the incident, no family member of respondent No. 1 had visited the SRP Quarters at ONGC Colony, Palavasna. Therefore, the statement of the complainant that, on 25.11.2011, he received a telephone call from the deceased wherein she had complained against her sister-in-law, Merajbibí, alleging that she had visited the house, taunted her, and subjected her to harassment, is not at all established by the evidence of the prosecution witnesses. Except for the interested witnesses, namely PW-1, PW-5, PW-8, PW-9 and PW-13, no other witness has deposed regarding any harassment or ill-treatment allegedly meted out to the deceased. Therefore, the prosecution has failed to establish this fundamental fact and, more particularly, the basic ingredients of Sections 306, 498-A and 107 of the IPC, read with Sections 113-A and 113-B of the Indian Evidence Act.

14. So far as the allegations under Sections 3 and 7 of the Dowry Prohibition Act are concerned, no satisfactory evidence has been

produced by the prosecution. The evidence of PW-1 itself creates serious doubt regarding this aspect, and, during his cross-examination, the allegation regarding the advancement of Rs.50,000/- has been completely washed away. If the evidence of PW-14 and PW-16 is considered, both being police witnesses, their testimony does not support the prosecution's case regarding the alleged ill-treatment or harassment of the deceased. Thus, the prosecution has failed to establish the charges against the respondents beyond reasonable doubt. It is well settled, in light of the principles enunciated by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, that unless and until the prosecution places sufficient evidence before the Court to establish that the deceased was subjected to harassment or cruelty, the Court cannot draw an inference against the respondents-accused under Sections 113-A and 113-B of the Indian Evidence Act. Unless and until any abetment, instigation or any provocation is proved by the prosecution as provided under section 107 of the IPC, the charge under section 306 read with 498A of the IPC cannot stand on its own. In the present case, there is no cogent evidence to establish any such abetment or instigation on the part of the respondents-accused.

14.1 At this stage, it would be appropriate to refer and rely upon the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the cases of **Ramesh Kumar Vs. State of Chhattisgarh** reported in **2001 (9) SCC 618**, more particularly, paragraph no. 11 and the case of **Ram Pyarey Vs. State of Uttar Pradesh** reported in **2025 (6) SCC 820**, more particularly, paragraph no. 12, wherein the Hon'ble Supreme Court has observed that for the abetment of suicide punishable u/s 306 of the IPC, now, it is well settled that the presumption under section 113 B of the Evidence Act is required to be proved that continuous cruelty was meted out to the deceased.

14.2 The relevant para - 12 of **Ram Pyarey (supra)** passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court reads as under:-

"12. The law as regards the abetment of suicide punishable under Sections 306 of the IPC is now well settled. It appears that the Courts below laid much emphasis on Section 113B of the Evidence Act, 1872 (for short, "the Evidence Act").

Section 113A of the Evidence Act talks about presumption.

Section 113A and Section 113B read thus:-

113A. Presumption as to abetment of suicide by a married woman:- When the question is whether the commission of suicide by a woman had been abetted by her husband or any relative of her husband and it is shown that she had committed suicide within a period of seven years from the date of her marriage and that her husband or such relative of her husband had subjected her to cruelty, the Court may presume, having regard to all the other circumstances of the case, that such suicide had been abetted by her husband or by such relative of her husband.

Explanation.- For the purposes of this section, "cruelty" shall have the same meaning as in section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860).

113B. Presumption as to dowry death:- When the question is whether a person has committed the dowry death of a woman and it is shown that soon before her death such woman had been subjected by such person to cruelty or harassment for, or in connection with, any demand for dowry, the Court shall presume that such person had caused the dowry death.

Explanation:- For the purposes of this section, "dowry death" shall have the same meaning as in section 304B of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860)."

15. If the ingredients of Section 306 of the Indian Penal Code are considered, the same have been clearly dealt with by the Hon'ble

Supreme Court in the case of ***Gangula Mohan Reddy v. State of Andhra Pradesh reported in (2010) 1 SCC 750***. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has observed that there must be a clear and proximate act of instigation or abetment on the part of the accused which has led to the commission of suicide. Unless such an act or omission on the part of the accused is proved beyond reasonable doubt, the accused cannot be held guilty of an offence under Section 306 IPC.

15.1 The Section 306 of the IPC is reproduced as under:

"Section 306: Abetment of suicide

If any person commits suicide, whoever abets the commission of such suicide, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine."

16. At this stage, it would be appropriate to refer to the decisions in the case of (1) Ramesh Kumar Vs. State of Chhattisgarh reported in (2001) 9 SCC 618, (2) State of Gujarat Vs. Bhaveshbhai Manilalbhai Patel reported in 2025 (2) GLR 923, (3) Ram Pyare Vs. State of Uttar Pradesh reported in (2025) 6 SCC 820, (4) State of Gujarat Vs. Haji Haroon Meman reported in 2026 (0) JX (Guj) 105 and (5) State of Gujarat Vs. Ashwinbhai Naginbhai Tandel reported in 2025 (0) JX(Guj) 357.

17. Therefore, in light of the facts stated hereinabove, the submissions advanced by both sides, and upon perusal of the impugned judgment and order, as well as the reasons recorded by the trial Court in the impugned judgment, it is clear that the prosecution has miserably failed to establish the charges against the respondents.

The trial Court has considered the evidence of the prosecution witnesses individually and in detail and has dealt with the depositions of each witness. After appreciating the evidence on record, the trial Court, has rightly recorded the reasons while passing the impugned judgment. In view of the above, I am of the opinion that the trial Court has not committed any error of facts and law in passing the impugned judgments and orders and there is no any illegality and infirmity found in the judgments and orders.

18. It is well settled by catena of decisions that the an Appellate Court has full power to review, re-appreciate and reconsider the evidence upon which the order of acquittal is founded. However, Appellate Court must bear in mind that in case of acquittal there is double presumption in favour of the accused. Firstly, the presumption of innocence is available to him under the fundamental principle of criminal jurisprudence that every person shall be presumed to be innocent unless he is proved guilty by a competent Court of law. Secondly, the accused having secured his acquittal, the presumption of their innocence is further reinforced, reaffirmed and strengthened by the trial Court.

19. Further, if two reasonable conclusions are possible on the basis of the evidence on record, the Appellate Court should not disturb the finding of acquittal recorded by the trial Court. Further, while exercising the powers in appeal against the order of acquittal, the Court of appeal would not ordinarily interfere with the order of acquittal unless the approach of the lower Court is vitiated by some manifest illegality and the conclusion arrived at would not be arrived at by any reasonable person and, therefore, the decision is to be characterized as perverse. Merely because two views are possible, the

Court of appeal would not take the view which would upset the judgment delivered by the Court below. However, the Appellate Court has a power to review the evidence if it is of the view that the conclusion arrived at by the Court below is perverse and the Court has committed a manifest error of law and ignored the material evidence on record. A duty is cast upon the Appellate Court, in such circumstances, to re-appreciate the evidence to arrive to a just decision on the basis of material placed on record to find out whether the accused are connected with the commission of the crime with which they are charged.

20. The scope and principles are enunciated by the Hon'ble Apex Court in case of **Chandrappa and others Vs. State of Karnataka** reported in **(2007) 4 SCC 415**, more particularly **paragraph Nos. 42 and 43**, which was subsequently re-affirmed by the Hon'ble Apex Court **Rajesh Prasad Vs. State of Bihar and another**, reported in **[2022] 3 SCC 471**, wherein, the Hon'ble Apex Court has enunciated the general principles in case of acquittal, more particularly in **paragraph No. 26** the general principles are set out by the Hon'ble Apex Court based upon various decisions of the Hon'ble Apex Court. Then in case of **Babu Sahebagouda Rudragoudar Vs. State of Karnataka, reported in AIR 2024 SC 2252 = (2024) 8 SCC 149**, the Hon'ble Apex Court has dealt with the similar issue, more particularly, in **paragraph Nos. 37 to 40**. Hence, I am in complete agreement with the findings recorded by the trial Court.

21. It is also worthwhile to refer to the recent decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Ramesh vs. State of Karnataka, reported in [2024] 9 SCC 169**, wherein the Hon'ble Supreme Court has held and observed in paras-20 and 21 as under:-

"20. At this stage, it would be relevant to refer to the general principles culled out by this Court in Chandrappa and others vs. State of Karnataka , regarding the power of the appellate Court while dealing with an appeal against a judgment of acquittal. The principles read thus:

"42. (1) An appellate court has full power to review, reappraise and reconsider the evidence upon which the order of acquittal is founded.

(2) The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 puts no limitation, restriction or condition on exercise of such power and an appellate court on the evidence before it may reach its own conclusion, both on questions of fact and of law.

(3) Various expressions, such as, "substantial and compelling reasons", "good and sufficient grounds", "very strong circumstances", "distorted conclusions", "glaring mistakes", etc. are not intended to curtail extensive powers of an appellate court in an appeal against acquittal. Such phraseologies are more in the nature of "flourishes of language" to emphasize the reluctance of an appellate court to interfere with acquittal than to curtail the power of the court to review the evidence and to come to its own conclusion.

(4) An appellate court, however, must bear in mind that in case of acquittal, there is double presumption in favour of the accused. Firstly, the presumption of innocence is available to him under the fundamental principle of criminal jurisprudence that every person shall be presumed to be innocent unless he is proved guilty by a competent court of law. Secondly, the accused having secured his acquittal, the presumption of his innocence is further reinforced, reaffirmed and strengthened by the trial court.

(5) If two reasonable conclusions are possible on the basis of the evidence on record, the appellate court should not disturb the finding of acquittal recorded by the trial court.

21. In Rajendra Prasad v. State of Bihar, a three-Judge Bench of this Court pointed out that it would be essential for the High Court, in an appeal against acquittal, to clearly

indicate firm and weighty grounds from the record for discarding the reasons of the Trial Court in order to be able to reach a contrary conclusion of guilt of the accused. It was further observed that, in an appeal against acquittal, it would not be legally sufficient for the High Court to take a contrary view about the credibility of witnesses and it is absolutely imperative that the High Court convincingly finds it well-nigh impossible for the Trial Court to reject their testimony. This was identified as the quintessence of the jurisprudential aspect of criminal justice. Viewed in this light, the brusque approach of the High Court in dealing with the appeal, resulting in the conviction of Appellant Nos. 1 and 2, reversing the cogent and well-considered judgment of acquittal by the Trial Court giving them the benefit of doubt, cannot be sustained."

22. Considering the entire evidence on record, it clearly appears that there is no credible evidence to connect the present accused with the alleged crime and the evidence on record is not so convincing to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the accused has committed the alleged crime. Therefore, the accused cannot be convicted on the evidence on record.

23. On perusal of the impugned judgments and orders, it clearly transpires that the concerned Court has not committed any error of fact and law in appreciating the evidence on record and in acquitting the accused from the charges levelled against them. Even on re-appreciation of the evidence, it clearly transpires that the prosecution has miserably failed to prove the charge levelled against the accused beyond reasonable doubt. Therefore, the impugned judgments and orders of the concerned Court are sustainable and the present appeals are liable to be dismissed.

24. In view of the above, the present appeals are devoid of merits and it deserves to be dismissed. Resultantly, they are dismissed. Both

the impugned judgment and order of acquittal passed by the concerned Court are hereby confirmed. Bail bond stands cancelled. Record and proceedings be sent back to the concerned Trial Court forthwith.

ANUSRI

(HEMANT M. PRACHCHAK,J)