

(2022) 09 GUJ CK 0010
In the Gujarat High Court
Case No : R/Criminal Appeal No. 2009 Of 2010

State Of Gujarat	Vs	APPELLANT
Amrishkumar Parshottambhai Patel & 4 OTHER(S)		RESPONDENT

Date of Decision : 01-09-2022

Acts Referred:

Code Of Criminal Procedure, 1973 — Section 209, 378, 378(1), 378(3), 417
Indian Penal Code, 1860 — Section 114, 294, 354, 504
Scheduled Caste And Scheduled Tribe (Prevention Of Atrocities) Act, 1989 — Section 3(i)(x)
Gujarat Secondary Education Act, 1972 — Section 36(1)

Citation : (2022) 09 GUJ CK 0010

Hon'ble Judges : Dr. Ashokkumar C. Joshi, J

Bench : Single Bench

Advocate : Jirga Jhaveri, Darshan Dave

Final Decision : Dismissed

Judgement

Dr. Ashokkumar C. Joshi, J

1. This appeal is preferred by the appellant – State under Section 378(1) (3) of the Criminal procedure Code, 1973 (Code) against the judgment and order dated 25.05.2010 passed in Special (Atrocity) Case No. 21 of 2008 by the learned Special Judge (Atrocity), Panchmahals at Godhra, recording the acquittal of the respondents - original accused for the charges under Sections 294, 354, 504 and 114 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC) and Section 3(i) (x) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (hereinafter referred to as “the Atrocity Act”).

2. Brief facts of the prosecution case are that Daxaben Nanabhai Amin registered a complaint against the respondents - accused with Kothamba Police Station, which was registered as I-CR No. 33/08 for the offences punishable under Sections 294, 354, 504 and 114, IPC and Section 3(i)(x) of the Atrocity Act. It is the case of the prosecution that complainant - Daxaben Nanabhai Amin was

performing her duties as an Assistant Teacher in Navjivan High School situated at Thana Savli village. The complainant was a divorcee. In the school, the respondent No. 1 herein was serving as a Principal, who allegedly, harassing and molesting the complainant saying that the complainant had a illicit relation with one Rajendrakumar Gadhvi, who was also serving in the same school, for which, the complainant also complained to the President of the school, who called the staff meeting on 10.02.2004, pursuant to which, the respondent No. 1 also orally apologized.

However, subsequently, the respondent No. 1 sacked said Rajendrakumar Gadhvi from the school. It is further the case of the prosecution that thereafter, the harassment and molestation to the complainant continued at the hands of the respondent No. 1, taking into confidence other staff members. That, the respondent No. 1 also asked the complainant to keep illicit relations with him to get reinstated said Rajendrakumar Gadhvi. That, the respondent No. 1 also asked the complainant to surrender to whole staff. That respondent No. 2, who was serving as a Librarian, also tried to molest the complainant. That respondent No. 3, who was a co-employee, used to come to the school in drunken condition and speak abusive words and harass the complainant. On 19.04.2008, when the complainant was sitting in the staff room alone, the respondent No. 1 came and dashing with her chair knowingly, sat in another chair. Thereafter, again the respondent No. 1 knowingly dashed with her chair and as soon as the complainant stood up, the respondent No. 1 took her in his arms and hence, the complainant slapped him twice, however, with a view to save his image, the respondent No. 1 on the contrary got the complaint registered against the complainant and that Rajendra Gadhvi through one Binaben. Nonetheless, the complainant approached Kothamba Police Station to register the complaint, and at that time, the President of school intervened and told her that if she would file the complaint, the image of school would be tarnished. However, he assured to call the staff meeting and solve the issue, but to a surprise of the complainant, in the meeting, she was asked to submit the apology (letter). Further, the respondent Nos. 4 and 5 also insulted the complainant of her caste and also gave abuses to her and asked her to dismiss her from the school. Hence, the complainant, on her own, gave resignation from the school. Thus, the respondents committed the offence in question for which, complaint came to be registered against them.

3. On the basis of the said complaint, investigation was initiated and after thorough investigation as there was sufficient evidence against the respondents – accused persons, charge-sheet was filed before the learned Judicial Magistrate First Class, Lunavada. As the offence was exclusively triable by the Court of Sessions, as per the provisions of Section 209 of the Code, the case was committed to the Court of Sessions, where, it was numbered as Special (Atrocity) Case No. 21 of 2008. Thereafter, Charge was framed against the accused persons and as the accused pleaded not guilty to the charge and claimed to be tried, trial commenced. To prove the case, the prosecution has

examined as many as 17 witnesses and produced several documentary evidence. On conclusion of the trial, the learned trial Judge was pleased to acquit the accused persons. Being aggrieved by the same, the State has preferred the present appeal.

4. Heard, learned Additional Public Prosecutor Ms. Jirga Jhaveri for the appellant – State and learned Advocate Mr. Darshan Dave for HL Patel Advocates for the respondents - original accused. It is pertinent to note that by an order dated 19.07.2022, the appeal qua respondent No. 3 – original accused No. 3 is abated. Accordingly, the appeal is heard qua rest.

4.1 The learned Additional Public Prosecutor for the appellant - State has mainly contended that the learned trial Judge has erred in holding that the prosecution has failed to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor submitted that the impugned judgment of the trial Court is based on presumptions and inferences and thereby, it is against the facts and the evidence on record. The learned Additional Public Prosecutor further submitted that the learned trial Judge has failed to appreciate the evidence on record in its true and proper perspective and thereby, has erred in recording the acquittal of the respondents – original accused.

4.2 The learned Additional Public Prosecutor for the appellant referred to the judgment and order as well as the evidence of the prosecution witnesses and the other documentary evidence and submitted that the judgment and order of acquittal passed by the learned trial Judge is contrary to law, evidence on record and the principles of natural justice and hence, the same deserves to be quashed and set aside. It is further contended that the learned trial Judge ought to have appreciated the fact that there were direct as well as indirect evidence connecting respondents with crime in question, despite the same, without properly appreciating the oral as well as documentary evidence on record of the case, straight way has arrived at the conclusion that the prosecution has failed to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt for the alleged offence under Sections 294, 354, 504 and 114 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 3(i)(x) of the Atrocity Act, and thereby, has erred gravely.

4.3 The learned Additional Public Prosecutor has further submitted that the learned trial Judge has failed to appreciate that prosecution has proved its case beyond reasonable doubt. She submitted that the learned trial Judge has committed error in giving undue importance to minor omissions and contradictions in the evidence of prosecution witnesses and therefore, the reasons assigned by the learned trial Judge while appreciating the evidence as well as while acquitting the accused persons are improper, perverse and bad in law. Therefore, it is submitted that the present appeal may be allowed.

5. Per contra, learned advocate Mr. Darshan Dave for the HL Patel Advocates for the respondents, while supporting the impugned judgment and order of the trial Court, submitted that the learned trial Judge has, after due and proper

appreciation and evaluation of the evidence on record, has come to such a conclusion and has acquitted the accused, which is just and proper. He submitted that it is trite law that if two views 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.

5.1 The learned advocate for the respondents – accused submitted that the ingredients of the offence alleged against the accused are not proved by the prosecution beyond reasonable doubt and there were several contradictions and omissions in the evidence on record and therefore, the learned trial Judge has rightly acquitted the accused of the charges levelled against them.

5.2 It is submitted by the learned advocate for the respondents that on the contrary, complaint was filed against the complainant. Accordingly, the learned trial Judge has rightly acquitted the respondents – accused as the prosecution has failed to bring home the charge against the accused.

5.3 The learned advocate for the respondents – accused further submitted that the complaint for the offence in question was lodged belatedly for which, no justifiable explanation is coming forward on record.

5.4 Thus, making above submissions, it is urged that no interference is required at the hands of this Court and eventually, it is urged that the present appeal may be dismissed.

6. Heard the learned advocates for the respective parties and gone through the impugned judgment and order of the trial Court as well as the material on record.

6.1 Before advertng to the facts of the case, it would be worthwhile to refer to the scope of interference in acquittal appeals. It is well settled by catena of decisions that an appellate Court has full power to review, re-appreciate and consider the evidence upon which the order of acquittal is founded. However, the Appellate Court must bear in mind that in case of acquittal, there is prejudice 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 reaffirmed and strengthened by the trial Court.

6.2 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 arrive at would not be arrived at by any

reasonable person, and therefore, the decision is to be characterized as perverse.

6.3 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. That the duty is cast upon the appellate Court, in such circumstances, to re-appreciate the evidence to arrive to just decision on the basis of material placed on record to find out whether the accused is connected with the commission of the crime with which he is charged.

6.4 In *Mallikarjun Kodagali (Dead) represented through Legal Representatives v. State of Karnataka and Others*, (2019) 2 SCC 752, the Apex Court has observed that:

"The presumption of innocence which is attached to every accused gets fortified and strengthened when the said accused is acquitted by the trial Court. Probably, for this reason, the law makers felt that when the appeal is to be filed in the High Court it should not be filed as a matter of course or as matter of right but leave of the High Court must be obtained before the appeal is entertained. This would not only prevent the High Court from being flooded with appeals but more importantly would ensure that innocent persons who have already faced the tribulation of a long drawn out criminal trial are not again unnecessarily dragged to the High Court".

6.5 Yet in another decision in *Chaman Lal v. The State of Himachal Pradesh*, rendered in Criminal Appeal No. 1229 of 2017 on 03.12.2020, 2020 SCC OnLine SC 988 the Apex Court has observed as under:

"9.1 In the case of *Babu v. State of Kerala*, (2010) 9 SCC 189), this Court had reiterated the principles to be followed in an appeal against acquittal under Section 378 Cr.P.C. In paragraphs 12 to 19, it is observed and held as under:

12. This Court time and again has laid down the guidelines for the High Court to interfere with the judgment and order of acquittal passed by the trial court. The appellate court should not ordinarily set aside a judgment of acquittal in a case where two views are possible, though the view of the appellate court may be the more probable one. While dealing with a judgment of acquittal, the appellate court has to consider the entire evidence on record, so as to arrive at a finding as to whether the views of the trial court were perverse or otherwise unsustainable. The appellate court is entitled to consider whether in arriving at a finding of fact, the trial court had failed to take into consideration admissible evidence and/or had taken into consideration the evidence brought on record contrary to law. Similarly, wrong placing of burden of proof may also be a subject-matter of scrutiny by the appellate court. (Vide *Balak Ram v. State of U.P* (1975) 3 SCC 219, *Shambhoo Missir v. State of Bihar* (1990) 4 SCC 17, *Shailendra Pratap v. State of U.P* (2003) 1 SCC 761, *Narendra Singh v. State of M.P* (2004)

10 SCC 699, Budh Singh v. State of U.P (2006) 9 SCC 731, State of U.P. v. Ram Veer Singh (2007) 13 SCC 102, S. Rama Krishna v. S. Rami Reddy (2008) 5 SCC 535, Arulvelu v. State (2009) 10 SCC 206, Perla Somasekhara Reddy v. State of A.P (2009) 16 SCC 98 and Ram Singh v. State of H.P (2010) 2 SCC 445)

13. In Sheo Swarup v. King Emperor AIR 1934 PC 227, the Privy Council observed as under: (IA p. 404) "... the High Court should and will always give proper weight and consideration to such matters as (1) the views of the trial Judge as to the credibility of the witnesses; (2) the presumption of innocence in favour of the accused, a presumption certainly not weakened by the fact that he has been acquitted at his trial; (3) the right of the accused to the benefit of any doubt; and (4) the slowness of an appellate court in disturbing a finding of fact arrived at by a Judge who had the advantage of seeing the witnesses."

14. The aforesaid principle of law has consistently been followed by this Court. (See Tulsiram Kanu v. State AIR 1954 SC 1, Balbir Singh v. State of Punjab AIR 1957 SC 216, M.G. Agarwal v. State of Maharashtra AIR 1963 SC 200, Khedu Mohton v. State of Bihar (1970) 2 SCC 450, Sambasivan v. State of Kerala (1998) 5 SCC 412, Bhagwan Singh v. State of M.P(2002) 4 SCC 85 and State of Goa v. Sanjay Thakran (2007) 3 SCC 755)

15. In Chandrappa v. State of Karnataka (2007) 4 SCC 415, this Court reiterated the legal position as under: (SCC p. 432, para 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 emphasise 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.”

16. In *Ghurey Lal v. State of U.P* (2008) 10 SCC 450, this Court reiterated the said view, observing that the appellate court in dealing with the cases in which the trial courts have acquitted the accused, should bear in mind that the trial court’s acquittal bolsters the presumption that he is innocent.

The appellate court must give due weight and consideration to the decision of the trial court as the trial court had the distinct advantage of watching the demeanour of the witnesses, and was in a better position to evaluate the credibility of the witnesses.

17. In *State of Rajasthan v. Naresh* (2009) 9 SCC 368, the Court again examined the earlier judgments of this Court and laid down that: (SCC p. 374, para 20)

“20. ... an order of acquittal should not be lightly interfered with even if the court believes that there is some evidence pointing out the finger towards the accused.”

18. In *State of U.P. v. Banne* (2009) 4 SCC 271, this Court gave certain illustrative circumstances in which the Court would be justified in interfering with a judgment of acquittal by the High Court. The circumstances include: (SCC p. 286, para 28) “(i) The High Court’s decision is based on totally erroneous view of law by ignoring the settled legal position;

(ii) The High Court’s conclusions are contrary to evidence and documents on record;

(iii) The entire approach of the High Court in dealing with the evidence was patently illegal leading to grave miscarriage of justice;

(iv) The High Court’s judgment is manifestly unjust and unreasonable based on erroneous law and facts on the record of the case;

(v) This Court must always give proper weight and consideration to the findings of the High Court;

(vi) This Court would be extremely reluctant in interfering with a case when both the Sessions Court and the High Court have recorded an order of acquittal.” A similar view has been reiterated by this Court in *Dhanapal v. State* (2009) 10 SCC 401.

19. Thus, the law on the issue can be summarised to the effect that in exceptional cases where there are compelling circumstances, and the judgment under appeal is found to be perverse, the appellate court can interfere with the order of acquittal. The appellate court should bear in mind the presumption of innocence of the accused and further that the trial court’s acquittal bolsters the presumption of his innocence. Interference in a routine manner where the other view is possible should be avoided, unless there are good reasons for interference.”

9.2 When the findings of fact recorded by a court can be held to be perverse has

been dealt with and considered in paragraph 20 of the aforesaid decision, which reads as under:

"20. The findings of fact recorded by a court can be held to be perverse if the findings have been arrived at by ignoring or excluding relevant material or by taking into consideration irrelevant/inadmissible material. The finding may also be said to be perverse if it is "against the weight of evidence", or if the finding so outrageously defies logic as to suffer from the vice of irrationality. (Vide *Rajinder Kumar Kindra v. Delhi Admn* (1984) 4 SCC 635, *Excise and Taxation Officer -cum- Assessing Authority v. Gopi Nath & Sons* 1992 Supp (2) SCC 312, *Triveni Rubber & Plastics v. CCE* 1994 Supp. (3) SCC 665, *Gaya Din v. Hanuman Prasad* (2001) 1 SCC 501, *Aruvelu v. State* (2009) 10 SCC 206 and *Gamini Bala Koteswara Rao v. State of A.P* (2009) 10 SCC 636)." (emphasis supplied)

9.3 It is further observed, after following the decision of this Court in the case of *Kuldeep Singh v. Commissioner of Police* (1999) 2 SCC 10, that if a decision is arrived at on the basis of no evidence or thoroughly unreliable evidence and no reasonable person would act upon it, the order would be perverse. But if there is some evidence on record which is acceptable and which could be relied upon, the conclusions would not be treated as perverse and the findings would not be interfered with.

9.4 In the recent decision of *Vijay Mohan Singh v. State of Karnataka*, (2019) 5 SCC 436, this Court again had an occasion to consider the scope of Section 378 Cr.P.C. and the interference by the High Court in an appeal against acquittal. This Court considered catena of decisions of this Court right from 1952 onwards. In paragraph 31, it is observed and held as under:

"31. An identical question came to be considered before this Court in *Umedbhai Jadavbhai* (1978) 1 SCC 228. In the case before this Court, the High Court interfered with the order of acquittal passed by the learned trial court on reappreciation of the entire evidence on record. However, the High Court, while reversing the acquittal, did not consider the reasons given by the learned trial court while acquitting the accused. Confirming the judgment of the High Court, this Court observed and held in para 10 as under: (SCC p. 233)

"10. Once the appeal was rightly entertained against the order of acquittal, the High Court was entitled to reappreciate the entire evidence independently and come to its own conclusion. Ordinarily, the High Court would give due importance to the opinion of the Sessions Judge if the same were arrived at after proper appreciation of the evidence. This rule will not be applicable in the present case where the Sessions Judge has made an absolutely wrong assumption of a very material and clinching aspect in the peculiar circumstances of the case."

31.1. In *Sambasivan v. State of Kerala* (1998) 5 SCC 412, the High Court reversed the order of acquittal passed by the learned trial court and held the accused guilty on re-appreciation of the entire evidence on record, however, the High Court did not record its conclusion on the question whether the approach of

the trial court in dealing with the evidence was patently illegal or the conclusions arrived at by it were wholly untenable. Confirming the order passed by the High Court convicting the accused on reversal of the acquittal passed by the learned trial court, after being satisfied that the order of acquittal passed by the learned trial court was perverse and suffered from infirmities, this Court declined to interfere with the order of conviction passed by the High Court.

While confirming the order of conviction passed by the High Court, this Court observed in para 8 as under: (SCC p. 416)

"8. We have perused the judgment under appeal to ascertain whether the High Court has conformed to the aforementioned principles. We find that the High Court has not strictly proceeded in the manner laid down by this Court in *Ramesh Babulal Doshi v. State of Gujarat* (1996) 9 SCC 225 viz. first recording its conclusion on the question whether the approach of the trial court in dealing with the evidence was patently illegal or the conclusions arrived at by it were wholly untenable, which alone will justify interference in an order of acquittal though the High Court has rendered a well-considered judgment duly meeting all the contentions raised before it. But then will this non-compliance per se justify setting aside the judgment under appeal? We think, not. In our view, in such a case, the approach of the court which is considering the validity of the judgment of an appellate court which has reversed the order of acquittal passed by the trial court, should be to satisfy itself if the approach of the trial court in dealing with the evidence was patently illegal or conclusions arrived at by it are demonstrably unsustainable and whether the judgment of the appellate court is free from those infirmities; if so to hold that the trial court judgment warranted interference. In such a case, there is obviously no reason why the appellate court's judgment should be disturbed. But if on the other hand the court comes to the conclusion that the judgment of the trial court does not suffer from any infirmity, it cannot but be held that the interference by the appellate court in the order of acquittal was not justified; then in such a case the judgment of the appellate court has to be set aside as of the two reasonable views, the one in support of the acquittal alone has to stand. Having regard to the above discussion, we shall proceed to examine the judgment of the trial court in this case."

31.2. In *K. Ramakrishnan Unnithan v. State of Kerala* (1999) 3 SCC 309, after observing that though there is some substance in the grievance of the learned counsel appearing on behalf of the accused that the High Court has not adverted to all the reasons given by the trial Judge for according an order of acquittal, this Court refused to set aside the order of conviction passed by the High Court after having found that the approach of the Sessions Judge in recording the order of acquittal was not proper and the conclusion arrived at by the learned Sessions Judge on several aspects was unsustainable. This Court further observed that as the Sessions Judge was not justified in discarding the relevant/material evidence while acquitting the accused, the High Court, therefore, was fully entitled to reappraise the evidence and record its own conclusion. This Court scrutinised

the evidence of the eyewitnesses and opined that reasons adduced by the trial court for discarding the testimony of the eyewitnesses were not at all sound. This Court also observed that as the evaluation of the evidence made by the trial court was manifestly erroneous and therefore it was the duty of the High Court to interfere with an order of acquittal passed by the learned Sessions Judge.

31.3. In *Atley v. State of U.P.* AIR 1955 SC 807, in para 5, this Court observed and held as under: (AIR pp. 80910) "5. It has been argued by the learned counsel for the appellant that the judgment of the trial court being one of acquittal, the High Court should not have set it aside on mere appreciation of the evidence led on behalf of the prosecution unless it came to the conclusion that the judgment of the trial Judge was perverse. In our opinion, it is not correct to say that unless the appellate court in an appeal under Section 417 Cr.P.C came to the conclusion that the judgment of acquittal under appeal was perverse it could not set aside that order.

It has been laid down by this Court that it is open to the High Court on an appeal against an order of acquittal to review the entire evidence and to come to its own conclusion, of course, keeping in view the well-established rule that the presumption of innocence of the accused is not weakened but strengthened by the judgment of acquittal passed by the trial court which had the advantage of observing the demeanour of witnesses whose evidence have been recorded in its presence.

It is also well settled that the court of appeal has as wide powers of appreciation of evidence in an appeal against an order of acquittal as in the case of an appeal against an order of conviction, subject to the riders that the presumption of innocence with which the accused person starts in the trial court continues even up to the appellate stage and that the appellate court should attach due weight to the opinion of the trial court which recorded the order of acquittal.

If the appellate court reviews the evidence, keeping those principles in mind, and comes to a contrary conclusion, the judgment cannot be said to have been vitiated. (See in this connection the very cases cited at the Bar, namely, *Surajpal Singh v. State* AIR 1952 SC 52; *Wilayat Khan v. State of U.P* AIR 1953 SC 122) In our opinion, there is no substance in the contention raised on behalf of the appellant that the High Court was not justified in reviewing the entire evidence and coming to its own conclusions.

31.4. In *K. Gopal Reddy v. State of A.P.* (1979) 1 SCC 355, this Court has observed that where the trial court allows itself to be beset with fanciful doubts, rejects creditworthy evidence for slender reasons and takes a view of the evidence which is but barely possible, it is the obvious duty of the High Court to interfere in the interest of justice, lest the administration of justice be brought to ridicule."

(emphasis supplied)."

6.6 In the aforesaid backdrop, considering the oral as well as the documentary evidence on record vis-a-vis impugned judgment and order of the trial Court, following aspects weighed with by the Court:

i) a perusal of the deposition of PW-1 Daxaben Nanabhai Amin, Exh. 16, the complainant, reveals that while recording her examination-in-chief, she was warned by the learned trial Judge to give deposition as per her complaint, as despite informed time and again, she was not giving deposition as per her complaint, which appears to be a crucial aspect of the matter as the conduct and demeanour of a witness matters, to rely upon his/her testimony;

ii) further perusal of the deposition of the complainant (PW-1) reveals that earlier, she had a brawl with one Binaben (PW-10), serving in her school on the count of examining the papers of nephew of one Rajubhai Gadhvi (PW-4), and hence, she had filed a complaint against the complainant as well as co-teacher Rajubhai Gadhvi, pursuant to which, she was arrested and released on bail;

iii) after the said incident with Binaben, present complaint appears to have been filed that too, belatedly, for which, no satisfactory explanation is coming forward;

iv) the complainant has also admitted in her deposition that prior to 2008 i.e. filing of the complaint in question, she had not filed any complaint nor had informed in any department including the police department;

v) PW-2 Pratapsinh Sursinh Rathod, Exh. 24 and PW-3 Babubhai Somabhai Vankar, Exh. 26 have turned hostile and not supported the case of the prosecution;

vi) PW-4 Rajendrakumar Mulubhai Gadhvi, Exh. 27, in his cross-examination has specifically admitted that except incidents of 19.04.2008 and 21.04.2008, all the facts stated in his examination-in-chief, were told to him by Daxaben (complainant) meaning thereby, he had no personal knowledge about the same. This witness has also admitted that proceedings under Section 36(1) of the Secondary Education Act had been initiated against him. Further, this witness was also, time and again, warned by the Court as was not deposing properly;

vii) PW-5 Maheshkumar Nanabhai Amin, Exh. 28, who is the brother of the complainant and PW-6 Bhikhabhai Devabhai Vankar, Exh. 29, PW-7 Mayaben Rajendrakumar Gadhvi, Exh.

30, PW-8 Nathabhai Lalabhai Vankar, Exh. 31 and PW-9 Khaniben Nanjibhai Vankar, Exh. 32, the mother of the complainant, appear to be the hearsay/interested witnesses.

viii) PW-10 Binaben Somabhai Kalidas Patel, Exh. 33 has stated in her cross-examination that in her school, there was ritual of tying Rakhi to the teachers on the occasion of Raxabandhan, however, Daxaben (complainant) never used to tie Rakhi to Rajubhai Gadhvi (PW-4). This witness has also stated in her cross-examination that on 19.04.2008, Rajubhai (PW-4) had come to her to get solved

the paper of Geography so as to help his nephew in the examination and on denying to do so, quarrel took place and Rajubhai had beat her. She has also stated that in the past, it was never happened that respondent Nos. 2 and 3 had ever misbehaved with Daxaben (complainant) and/or abused her. She has also denied to have anything happened on the date of incident i.e. 19.04.2008 to the effect that Amrishbhai Patel had dashed with Daxaben (complainant) and thereafter, tried to take her in his arms.

ix) PW-11 Manharlal Ramanlal Shah, Exh. 34, who was the President of the school, has admitted in his cross-examination that the complainant had not given any complaint in the past with regard to behaviour/conduct of the respondents – accused;

x) a perusal of the deposition of PW-12 Shantagiri Himatgiri Gosai, Exh. 35, who was a senior teacher, reveals that a disciplinary committee was formed to take appropriate actions against the complainant under Section 36(1) of the Secondary Education Act for the misconduct and irregularity;

xi) PW-13 Chaturbhai Maganbhai Raval, Exh. 36, who was serving as Peon in the school, in his examination-in-chief, has specifically stated that on 19.04.2008 Gadhvisaheb (PW-4) had given filthy abuses to Binaben (PW-10) and also beaten her. Thereafter, Daxaben (complainant) had also beaten Binaben. This witness has further stated in his examination-in-chief that the complainant had also slapped twice Amrishbhai Patel, the Principal of the school. In his cross-examination, he has specifically stated that on 19.04.2008, no incident either of dashing with the chair of Daxaben (complainant) or molesting her had taken place. Further, he has also stated that no incident of uttering disrespectful/unparliamentary words against the caste of the complainant and/or giving filthy abuses to the complainant had taken place.

xii) PW-14 Maheshkumar Jayantilal Patel, Exh. 37 from whose office, Caste Certificate at Exh. 17 was issued;

xiii) the other are the police witnesses;

xiv) it is trite law that conviction can be awarded placing reliance upon a sole witness, nonetheless, the same should be reliable and trustworthy. Further, the standard of proof in criminal cases is beyond reasonable doubt.

6.7 Thus, on re-appreciation and reevaluation of the oral as well as documentary evidence on record, as referred to herein above, it transpires that there are contradictions and omissions in the evidence of the prosecution witnesses. The learned trial Judge has observed that on considering the evidence on record there appears no trustworthy evidence on record to prove the charge levelled against the accused and the prosecution has failed to bring home the charges levelled against the accused inasmuch as the ingredients of the offence alleged are not fulfilled. This Court has gone through in detail the impugned judgment and order and found that the learned trial Judge has meticulously considered the

depositions of all the witnesses and came to the conclusion that the prosecution has failed to prove the case against the accused beyond reasonable doubt and in the considered opinion of this Court, the learned trial Judge has rightly come to such a conclusion, which does not call for any interference at the hands of this Court.

7. In view of the aforesaid discussion and observations, in the considered opinion of this Court, the prosecution has failed to bring home the charge against accused for want of sufficient material. The findings recorded by the learned trial Judge do not call for any interference. Resultantly, in fleri, the appeal fails and is dismissed accordingly. Impugned judgment and order dated 25.05.2010 passed in Special (Atrocity) Case No. 21 of 2008 by the learned Special Judge (Atrocity), Panchmahals at Godhra, recording the acquittal of the respondents - accused is confirmed. Bail bond, if any, shall stand cancelled. R&P, if received, be transmitted back forthwith to the trial Court concerned.