



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LEGAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Open Access, Refereed Journal Multi Disciplinary  
Peer Reviewed Edition :

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# **SECTION 27 IS AN EXCEPTION OF THE SECTION 24, 25 & 26 OF THE EVIDENCE ACT.**

AUTHORED BY - NEHA GAVADE

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## **ABSTRACT**

In any criminal proceeding, along with other evidences, the confessions and admissions made before the court are of utmost importance. The evidence presented during a trial to prove relevant facts and facts in issue are governed by the provisions of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872. The law of evidence provides for which evidence is admissible in the court and which is regarded as inadmissible. Confessions are looked at as a subclass within the admissions made by an accused<sup>1</sup>. However, every confession is not admissible before the court of law. A confession is regarded as a statement given by the accused of a crime stating that the crime is committed by him. Generally, a confession has a high admissible value when it is made before a magistrate. Confession received through any other medium and recorded by any other authority is either less credible or inadmissible. However, the Evidence Act contains a provision wherein a part of such inadmissible confession, which can be proved by a discovery related to it, may be considered admissible. The provision that may provide admissibility to such inherently inadmissible provision may be regarded as an exception to the other provisions in question. This provision is the section 27 of the Evidence Act wherein it is given how much of the information received from the accused i.e. the confession maker, through his confession can be proved. It is interpreted as a proviso for section 24, 25 & 26, sections that talk about confessions that are irrelevant and which cannot be proved. Section 27 limits the complete destruction of the evidentiary value of a confession which comes under the scope of sections 24, 25 & 26, but it permits such confession to be proved only up to that extent to which it distinctly relates to a fact thereby discovered.

Thus, this paper is written for the purpose of proving, through interpretation of sections and with the backing of judicial precedents that section 27 of the Evidence Act acts as an exception to the section 24, 25 & 26 of the same.

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<sup>1</sup> *Deoman Upadhyaya vs. State, 1959 ALL. L. J. 651 ILR (1960) 1 ALL 72.*

## 1. OVERVIEW AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SECTIONS

Sections therein Chapter II of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 provides for evidence of relevancy of facts. Under that, evidence in the form of confessions and admissions are considered. Admissions are properly defined under the Evidence Act under section 17. However, there is no such 'to the word' definition of confession given under the Act. However, the courts have referred to the definition of confession given under Stephen's Digest of law which defines confession as an admission made by a person who is alleged to have committed an offence, wherein the person makes a statement or suggestion which draws out the conclusion that he has committed the offence.<sup>2</sup> Confession of a crime forms a very solid backing to the case of the prosecution, hence the same needs to be admitted before the court with a great caution, the reason being, if such a confession is extracted out of an accused by coercion or undue influence, then the conviction based on such a confession will lead to gross injustice. The Evidence Act thus, has laid down certain provisions which will ensure that the confessions recorded under certain circumstances will not have evidentiary value before the court of law. However, an unheeded following of such sections in the absence of a judicial bar may be exploited by the accused and adversely affect the victim/prosecutor/complaint. Hence a legal backing is provided to such 'inadmissible' confessions only up to such extent that those can be proved in a material form before the court of law. These sections may be understood in their actual terminologies as follows:

- **CONFESSION THAT IS A RESULT OF AN INDUCEMENT, THREAT OR PROMISE:**

Section 24 of the Indian Evidence Act provides that a confession made by a person accused of a crime becomes irrelevant to the proceedings of an offence, if it is apparent to the court that such a confession was extracted from the accused person by the means of inducement, threat, or promise and such an inducement, threat or promise was made by a person in authority which made the accused person believe that by making the said confession he will gain benefit or will elude from the temporal evils, with respect to the proceeding against him.<sup>3</sup>

The section is in line with section 316 of the Code of Criminal Procedure which prohibits influencing an accused person by making a promise or threat in order to induce him to reveal any information within his knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Aghnoo Nagesia vs. State of Bihar, 1966 SCR (1) 134.

<sup>3</sup> The Indian Evidence Act, 1872, Act No. 1 of 1872.

<sup>4</sup> The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, Act No. 2 of 1974.

- **CONFESSIONS MADE TO POLICE-OFFICER WILL BE OF NO PROOF:**

It is common knowledge that the confessions made before a police officer are not admissible before the court of law. The legal provision for the same is incorporated in Section 25 of the Act. The provision lays down that if a confession is made before a police officer, it shall not be proved against the person accused of an offence. The section includes the statement made to a police officer investigating a case.<sup>5</sup>

- **CONFESSION MADE BY AN ACCUSED IN THE CUSTODY OF POLICE NOT TO BE PROVED AGAINST HIM:**

The section 26 of the Act provides that if a person has made a confession while he was in the custody of a police-officer shall not be admissible as a proof unless, such a confession was made right in the presence of magistrate.<sup>6</sup> As the evidentiary value of a confession made before a magistrate is high, if the confession is made by an accused whilst he is in custody of police but also in the immediate presence of magistrate, it shall be proved against the accused person.

The above-mentioned sections take out the credibility of a confession made thereunder, however relevant it may be. But the confessions falling under the aforesaid sections 24, 25 & 26 can be proved by relying upon the provision of section 27.

- **THE EXTENT UP TO WHICH INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM AN ACCUSED MAY BE PROVED:**

Section 27 provides that if an accused is in the custody of a police-officer and has given out an information which leads to a discovery, then such information, may it be confession or not, may be proved only up to so much that it relates to the fact discovered therefrom.<sup>7</sup>

Section 27 of the Evidence Act is based on the Doctrine of Confirmation by subsequent events. Under which a fact is actually discovered from an information provided. The said discovery is in form of a physical object. Such fact discovered from the information is kind of an assurance that the accused's confession/statement /information given is reliable.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> ibid 3.

<sup>6</sup> ibid 3.

<sup>7</sup> ibid 3.

<sup>8</sup> ibid 1.

The fundamental application of literal rule of interpretation on the wordings of section 27 makes the reader/interpreter understand that the section is enshrined in the Evidence Act under the chapter of admissions and confessions, right after the provisions dealing with which confessions shall not be proved before the court of law, so as to provide for a legal measure to allow proving such confessions in a procedure established by law. The same is conclusive from the wording of section 27 which begins with the phrase 'provided that'. Thus, one can interpret the section as a proviso for the sections preceding it which makes certain confessions non-provable. Odgers in the book 'Construction of Deeds and Statutes'<sup>9</sup> defines a proviso as clauses of exception or qualification which is excepting something or qualifying something in the enactment which was not earlier therein. Thus section 27 is excepting some confessions from the ambit of non-provable confessions, making it an exception to section 24, 25 & 26 of the Act.

Thus, a mere overview of section 27 gives the idea that it gives the power to the prosecutor to prove a confession that is made to or in the custody of a police-officer if the information received from such confession can be proved before the court of law. In other words, given the fulfilment of certain conditions, a confession that falls under section 24, 25 & 26 of the Act can be proved under section 27. Thus, section 27 acts as an exception to the provisions contained therein in sections 24, 25 & 26. To highlight the conditions or grounds for the exceptional applicability of section 27 to the otherwise inadmissible confessions, I shall now cite judgments of the Indian Courts and interpret the provision of section 27.

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## 2. JUDICIAL PRECEDENTS

The Evidence Act gives out various provisions about the admissibility, relevance, necessity of proof etc. for various kinds of documents, statements, expert opinions and other such evidence. However, in certain conditions, the judge's discretion also plays a very crucial role in determining the admissibility of evidence. The Evidence Act is enacted to aid the judiciary in filtering out the good and relevant evidence from the irrelevant evidences. Therefore, it is important to consider that after applying the judicial mind, how the judges have interpret the provisions of the Act. Hence, judicial interpretation of relevant provisions of the Act are to be considered while testing the hypothesis of exception of this paper.

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. Vs. Tarun Pal Singh & Ors., on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

The 3 judges' bench of Hon'ble Justice JB Pardiwala, Hon'ble Justice BR Gavai and Hon'ble Justice Sanjay Kumar in one of their recent most judgment of 2023, interpret the section 27 and established 2 essential conditions under which a confession given to a police officer shall be counted admissible. **The conditions established by the Apex Court** are:

- That, the individual making the confession has to be an accused of an offence and,
- That, when the confession was made, the said individual was in the police-custody.<sup>10</sup>

In one more such case, while deciding upon the scope of the applicability of section 27 the Supreme Court had laid down grounds that are required to be present to bring section 27 into operation the discovered fact should be relevant with respect to the information received from the accused person, the discovery of the fact must be proved to i.e. to say it should be a fact not known to police beforehand, while the information was given, the accused was in the police-custody and lastly, only so much information shall be proved which leads to the discovery of a physical object.<sup>11</sup>

#### **A. How section 162 CRPC protects section 27 Evidence Act**

Section 162 of The Criminal Procedure Code can be understood as a procedural affirmation to that of the section 25 of the Evidence Act Section 162 states that if a statement has been given by a person to a police officer during the course of an investigation, then such statement is prevented from being used for any purpose in the course of a trial or inquiry with respect to the offence which was being investigated when the statement was made. However, at the same time it preserves the purpose of section 27 of the Evidence Act as well, by providing under sub-section (2) of the section that the provisions will not contradict with the whatever is given under section 27.<sup>12</sup> The same was affirmed was by the Supreme Court in the case of Dhiraj Kumar Vs. State of Bihar stating that the provision saves what is given under sub-section (2) of the section 164 and it shall not affect the section 27 of Indian Evidence Act.<sup>13</sup>

The interpretation of judges of section 27 wherein they have decided the parameters under which the information received or confession recorded be proved is of a very careful nature. That is to say that the interpretation successfully makes section 27 into an exception for the preceding

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.livelaw.in/supreme-court/s-27-evidence-act-discovery-cant-be-proved-against-person-if-he-wasnt-accused-of-any-offence-wasnt-in-custody-of-police-at-the-time-of-confession-supreme-court-238669>.

<sup>11</sup> Mohammad Inayatullah Vs. State of Maharashtra, 1976 AIR 483, 1976 SCR (1) 715

<sup>12</sup> ibid 4.

<sup>13</sup> Dhiraj Kumar Vs. State of Bihar on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2010.

sections but it also lays down that only a material discovery made on the basis of information ascertained from the statement/confession may be proved, and nothing else. Further, I shall cite relevant cases where section 27 was applied by judges as an exception while considering certain parts of the confession made to the police officer.

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### 3. THE JUDICIARY ADMITTING CONFESSIONS UNDER SECTION 27

In the case of **Aghnoo Nagesia Vs. State of Bihar**, the Hon'ble Supreme Court judges made an observation that if a confession cannot be proved due to the bar imposed under Evidence Act by any section such as s. 24, 25 or 26 then the whole of the statement of confession shall be discarded, including even minor facts that highlight incrimination, unless such parts of the confession can be proved under some other section, such as section 27.<sup>14</sup> However, the point of contention is that which other facts stated from the confessions shall be admitted. The judiciary in its precedents have already established that.

In the case of **State of (NCT Delhi) vs. Navjyot Singh Sandhu**, the Hon'ble Supreme Court commented that the fact discovered through a confession given to the police must be a solid, concrete fact, must be a material, physical object and not the state of mind.<sup>15</sup> A discovery where such concrete evidence is found, only that will be considered admissible, such as a murder weapon.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court in one of its very recent judgments convicted an accused while relying upon the provision of section 27. In the case of **Perumal Raja Vs. State** Represented by Inspector of Police, Hon'ble Justice Sanjiv Khanna while upholding the conviction of accused, put reliance on the statement given by the accused to the police about where he had disposed off the dead body of the deceased Rajani. The court while bringing section 27 of the Evidence Act into execution and admitted the confession as an evidence also stated that the accused's statement had laid to the discovery of the decomposed body parts of the deceased Rajani and the accused's absence in proving before the court how he had the knowledge of the body parts being disposed of there pointed nowhere else but to the fact that he himself had disposed the dead body in pieces.

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid* 2.

<sup>15</sup> *State (NCT of Delhi) Vs. Navjyot Sandhu alias Afsan Guru*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2005.

Thus, the statement was considered as confession to the crime and proved before the court of law under the section 27 of the Evidence Act.<sup>16</sup>

The privy council while deciding the case of **Pulukuri Kotayya & Ors. Vs. King Emperor**, had given an interpretation of section 27 of the Act. It had stated that the section 27 is an exception as to its preceding sections. The privy council, while enumerating the things that will be held admissible from a confession given to the police, under section 27, had made it clear that when the ban given under sections preceding section 27 is lifted by it. The court opined that when the accused gives information in his confession that the body so discovered is that of the person murdered by him, that the weapon produced is the one that he used to commit the offence, or in case of a dacoity, the valuables produced are the ones that were robbed by him in the dacoity, all such information shall be admissible. The ban imposed by the legislature in section 25 & 26 of the Act was with the view to prevent a confession from an accused made under the influence or pressure of police officers that may lead to his conviction but if the information acquired that was included in the confession which led to a subsequent discovery then the 'persuasive powers' of the police will be given equal footing and the ban induced by preceding sections shall lose its effect under section 27.<sup>17</sup>

In the above stated case of Aghnoo Nagesia, the accused had confessed before the police officer which was recorded by the police officer in form of FIR that how he had killed his aunt, her daughter and son-in-law over a property dispute, how he had committed the murders, where he had hidden the dead bodies and where he had concealed the murder weapon. The Supreme Court had commented in this case that a confession while being one whole document also has its severe parts wherein one gathers not only the actual commission of the crime but also the motive, preparation, provocation etc. Thus, the judges need to be careful as to what parts of the confession will be admitted. In the present case, except for the parts of the confession that were covered under section 27 of the Evidence Act and the part regarding the accused as first informant of the offense, all other parts were declared inadmissible by the court.<sup>18</sup>

In the case of **Legal Remembrancer Vs. Lalit Mohan Singh Roy**, the Calcutta High Court admitted only that part of the confession that talked about the happenings of the night before the commission of offence, wherein the motive behind the commission of offence was highlighted.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Perumal Raja Vs. State Represented by Inspector of Police, on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Pulukuri Kotayya & Ors. Vs. King Emperor, AIR 1947, PC 67: 48 Cri LJ 533: 74 IA 65.

<sup>18</sup> ibid 2.

<sup>19</sup> Legal Remembrancer Vs. Lalit Mohan Singh Roy, 1922 ILR 49 Cal. '167.

This precedent was followed and cited by a division bench of the Nagpur High Court wherein confession given by the accused was accepted by the court only up to the extent of introductory part and the part focussing on motive and opportunity to commit the crime by the accused, the case was of *Bharosa Ramdayal Vs. Emperor*.<sup>20</sup>

In the case of **Ram Singh vs. The state**, it was decided by the Rajasthan High Court that if the first information can be separated from the confession made by the accused, then the part that can be severed shall be admitted as a confession in the court of law. Based on this the High Court had admitted the part of the confession expressing the motive of the accused and his actions after the commission of crime which included how he had left the severely wounded victim at the place where the offence was committed and had covered victim in cloth so there was no chance of the victim's survival.<sup>21</sup>

### **Application Of Section 27 On Section 24**

The judicial precedents set out two main conditions for the acceptance of a confession by the accused under section 27, one of which is that the accused shall be in custody of the police-officer. However, the scope of section 24 is such that the confession may be given to any person of authority who is capable of influencing the mind of the accused by inducement, threat or promise of an adverse or beneficial consequence of the making of conversation. Here, in case of section 24, when the said authority person is that of the police officer, the burden of proof that the accused was made to make the confession under the inducement, threat or promise is on the accused itself.<sup>22</sup> Otherwise the confession will be considered as an ordinary confession and section 27 shall apply to its relevant portion.

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## **CONCLUSION**

The Evidence Act ensures that the proceedings of any judicial trial are structured on the basis of relevant and bonafide evidence. Thus, it has enacted provisions to filter good and relevant evidence from irrelevant and malafidely filed evidence. To fulfil this purpose of the Act, chapter II of evidence of relevancy of facts is provided. Therein, section 24, 25 & 26 talk about the confessions that cannot be proved before the court of law for the reasons of inducement, undue

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<sup>20</sup> *Bharosa Ramdayal Vs. Emperor*, A.T.R. 1941 Nag. 86.

<sup>21</sup> *Ram Singh vs. The state*, 1952, ILR 2 Rajasthan 93.

<sup>22</sup> Report No. 69, Chapter 11, Confessions & Admissions,

<https://www.advocatekhaj.com/library/lawreports/indianevidenceact/102.php?Title=Indian%20Evidence%20Act,%201872&STitle=Section%2024>.

influence or promise by person in authority, if it is given to a police officer, and if it is given when the accused is in custody of police and a magistrate is not present at the time of making of the statement. However, a loophole for these sections have been given by the legislature to have such confessions admitted before the court of law if the information acquired from such confessions lead to a discovery, then such relevant part of the confession may be proved before the court. The point of contention of this research paper is that how section 27 revives the admissibility of confessions that otherwise lose their credence because of falling under section 24, 25 & 26. Section 27 has been articulated in such a manner as while working like a proviso for its preceding sections, it lifts the ban on confessions put thereunder and becomes the exception for section 24, 25 & 26 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

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