

# SACH

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Even before we entered the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Gujarat carnage, 'forget it and move on' became a common expression from various quarters. People started talking about what Gujarat has achieved in the past few years. "Vibrant Gujarat" became a slogan within and outside Gujarat. Development and Gujarat became synonymous. Leading industrialist started queuing up for investment in Gujarat. Narendra Modi was projected as the man behind development. All this is so systematically done that even those who had shed tears during Gujarat carnage became vocal or silent supporters of Narendra Modi. The Time magazine from America put Narendra Modi's pictures on its cover. The same country had denied visa to Narendra Modi nine years ago.

Denial or forgetting history is a politics of extremely dangerous nature. If such events are forgotten we will never be able to learn lessons from such horrifying events. How can you tell those people to forget who lost everything during this period. How can you tell those people who, after the carnage was over went back to villages and were allowed to stay there under strict conditions imposed by their neighbors. Ten years after Godhra and Gujarat we have to resolve that we will not allow such events anymore to happen. And also for justice to be given to victims, we have to keep our memories of Gujarat carnage afresh.

## Ten Years On...!



*Fr. Cedric Prakash sj\**

Ten years on...!  
My unborn child  
Still screams in pain  
As cruel swords  
Plunder her mortal remains....

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Ten years on...!  
My son, ten years then  
Still haunts my day and night  
As I search him relentlessly  
In hope and in light....

Ten years on....!  
I writhe in sheer agony  
Me, they cut and chop  
In a way most barbaric  
Will they ever stop...?

Ten years on....!  
I am no longer a child  
But I still grovel in the earth  
Looking for my aged mother  
The one who gave me birth...

Ten years on....!  
I wake up in gripping fear  
My body is agitated  
Remembering those hideous men  
Who left me decapitated...

Ten years on....!  
My quest for Truth and Justice  
Will never die  
These need to prevail  
Only to nail the lie...

Ten years on....!  
'Forgive and forget', they tell me  
'Forgive', I can, if there is remorse  
'Forget' never, never! I say  
And I continue to run the course...  
25th February, 2012

*(This poem is written remembering the tenth anniversary of the Gujarat Carnage which began February-end 2002, leaving thousands - mainly Muslims - dead and many more homeless.)*

*(\*Fr. Cedric Prakash SJ is the Director of PRASHANT, the Ahmedabad based Jesuit Centre for Human Rights, Justice and Peace.)*

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# Can we salvage anything from the debris in Gujarat? Muharram arrived too soon

*Mushirul Hasan*

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The Gujarati Muslims — a mix of Khoja, Bohra and Memon communities — are markedly different from Muslims in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Follow their social habits and cultural traits, and the depth of their integration with local society may surprise you. They neither spearheaded nor actively supported the Pakistan movement. They speak Gujarati, not Urdu. They are religious without being swayed by Muslim orthodoxies. Their cultural symbols, mostly secular, lie in Gujarat, not in the volatile Indo-Gangetic belt. In short, they are the quintessential Indian. This makes the story of their genocide so much more poignant.

The Muslims observe Muharram (month of mourning) with usual solemnity. Processions are underway mourning the martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet of Islam, and his family. For the Muslims of Gujarat, though, Muharram arrived a bit too soon. Their lives are shattered by the orgy of violence. Burnt houses and commercial establishments and the debris of shrines and mosques, including one built in the 16th century, stand mute witness to the horrors

perpetrated in the land of Gandhi.

Survivors mourn their dead, the hapless victims of unprecedented hate and aggression. The dead cannot tell their tale, but the living do. The tragedy of Karbala took place in 680 AD on the bank of the Euphrates in Iraq; it was re-enacted on the Sabarmati River a few weeks

ago. For the Gujarati Muslim, every evening is sham-e-ghariban (the night of the mournful). The dawn brings little hope of a safe future. Darkness envelops the lives of the rich and poor, the urban dweller and the rural folk. *Raat aur subah bahut der gale milte-rahe* (daybreak and night lay long in each other's arms).

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True, Hindu-Muslim violence has rocked Gujarat before. But this carnage has turned its major cities into a graveyard of secular nationalism. M.A. Jinnah talked of two nations in the 1940s. Presumably, he erred in his judgement.

Yet, those of us who harp on composite culture as the principal feature of Indian society need to leave Gujarat out of our frame. Those of us who celebrate secular nationalism, as opposed to the two-nation theory, need to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the past. The 'Unity in Diversity' claptrap will not do.

As in Tel Aviv, where the UN Charter lies in tatters, Gujarat has become a live testimony to

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the utter contempt that the Indian Constitution and the rule of law have been reduced to by the BJP's elected representatives and their VHP and RSS allies. Yet, the chief minister remains in office despite the country-wide demand for his resignation and, receives, from the country's home minister, a testimonial of good conduct. Long live the sangh parivar's solidarity! The police commissioner's appalling conduct and indiscreet statements must be comforting to scores of senior police officers prone to wielding the big stick against the minorities, Dalits included, and trade union leaders. Even if indicted by a commission, he will go scot-free. The government-appointed commission is itself an alibi for inaction and a massive cover-up operation.

A few months ago, SIMI, an organisation of a couple of hundred misguided youth, was banned to please George W. Bush. But has Uncle Sam directed this government not to ban the VHP and the Bajrang Dal? Many of their members, masquerading as karsevaks or Rambhakts, adopt terrorist methods to kill, loot and intimidate the Muslim and Christian minorities. More than anything else, the stormtroopers of the BJP-RSS have tarnished Hinduism's tolerant and eclectic image. In an ugly display of violence, they have now attacked the citadel of democracy in Orissa. All in the name of the benign Lord Rama! Somebody has to call their bluff; else, they may cause incalculable damage to our polity and society.

Provisions of TADA and now POTA have been pressed into service to nab 'terrorists', though the perpetrators of the worst possible crimes against innocent civilians are still at large. Their knives are still out in the open. Only the Muslims — already battered and bruised — find themselves at the receiving end. They continue to suffer, their agony prolonged by the apathy and criminal neglect of the Gujarat administration. "Bury me, oh my country, under your pavement/ Where no man now dare walk with head held high/ Where your true lovers bringing you their homage/ Must go in furtive fear of life or limb/ For new-style law and order are in use/ Good men learn, 'stones locked up, and dogs turned loose'". Written in

Lahore jail in the 1950s by Faiz Ahmad Faiz, these lines sum up the sense of loss, tragedy and humiliation of India's Muslims in 2002.

Violence continues sporadically, spreading to the tribal belt. People flee their villages to become refugees in their own place of birth. Relief camps are inadequately equipped; yet the practitioners of modern hate, having performed their brutal operations with meticulous care and planning, prevent food and medicines from reaching the victims. Reminiscent of what happened during the dark days preceding the transfer of power, they have called for the social and economic boycott of the Muslims.

Scores of politicians, having heard and seen it all, do precious little to mount pressure on the central government to provide relief. Why don't they observe a symbolic fast, the traditional but effective Gandhian method, as an act of penance? Previous prime ministers visited sites of violence and brought some comfort to affected families; the present one has not moved out of 7, Race Course Road.

The NDA allies produce the familiar noises without rocking this government's boat. Kashmir's chief minister growls but to no avail. Self-proclaimed disciples of Rammanohar Lohia and Acharya Narendra Dev do the same. The socialists in the NDA, too, will make their peace with the establishment and remain firmly ensconced in the ministerial benches.

Love of power, in various limited forms, is almost universal. There is, however, a great difference between power desired as a means and power desired as an end in itself. Only in myth does Shiva drive a straight path through the opposition with his trident. In politics, the NDA partners, free India's gold-diggers, will bow before political exigencies.

In Gujarat's bloody landscape, the Muslims cannot be expected to pay heed to liberal and secular exhortations. Yet, they must eschew any form of retaliation. The nation's glory lies in our hands, in fostering reconciliation and promoting camaraderie between the religious communities. This is a moment of trial not just for the Muslims, but for the Indian nation. Freedom is in peril; let's defend it with all our might.

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# THE ROLE OF NEWSPAPERS DURING THE GUJARAT CARNAGE :

*a brief analysis for the period Feb 28 to March 24, 2002*

*By PUCL Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan, Baroda*

Gujarat has been ravaged by unprecedented violence since 27th February sending shockwaves all over the country. The spell of genocide that followed the Godhra massacre have seen newspapers playing a significant role in the long spiral of violence. Shanti Abhiyan and PUCL (People's Union For Civil Liberties), two Baroda-based organisations have been following the vernacular press as well as the English newspapers to analyse news reportage throughout this period.

The purpose of our analysis was to find out how the local press presented the riots to the readers. We wished to examine if the print media has in any way aggravated the relentless tensions in the city through inflammatory or communal reportage. For this it was important to look at individual newspapers and to also compare across newspapers. We have covered Gujarati language newspapers like *Sandesh* (Baroda Edition), *Gujarat Samachar* (Baroda Edition) and *Gujarat Today*. The Times of India and Indian Express are the two English dailies that we have analysed here.

A framework of analysis was drawn up to ensure a standard evaluation of all the newspapers we were scrutinising. The framework attempts to locate all the factors that would influence the quality and content of reportage. This in turn determines readership response to incidents being reported nationally and locally. Additionally, it also helps to contain or conflagrate communal tension and hostility.

## **Framework of Analysis in Brief**

- Headlines : Were the headlines provocative or inflammatory?
- Photographs : Where did they appear? What kinds of photographs are used?
- Language : Has the language been derogatory, offensive or biased?
- Sources : Where does the paper get its information from? Are interviews referred

to or sources identified? Who are the people interviewed?

- Rumours : Are the news reports substantiated?
- Editorials and analytical articles : What are the perspectives offered to the readers?
- Incorrect reporting : Are there reports which we know to be false?

According to this framework the newspapers we reviewed fall into different categories. We present our findings vis-à-vis individual newspapers section-wise.

## **I**

### **THE LANGUAGE PRESS**

#### **1.1 SANDESH, Baroda Edition**

According to our above framework, the Gujarati newspaper Sandesh, Baroda has crossed all limits of responsible journalism and has been at its inflammatory best. While it is difficult to give an exact translation of the articles and news reports that have appeared in the newspaper we have selected a few reports and summarised them in Annexure. As Shanti Abhiyan and PUCL have formed a few fact-finding teams, it has been possible for us to compare facts unearthed during our field visits with the news that has been reported.

The Annexure also contains brief analysis of individual articles.

The major characteristic of Sandesh, in the period under review, has been to feed on the prevalent anti-Muslim prejudices of its Hindu readership and provoke it further by sensationalising, twisting, mangling and distorting news or what passes for it. The average Hindu reader in Baroda feels that he is getting value for money and 'real' reportage.

**Some characteristics of news articles, reports and editorials appearing in the Sandesh:**

- *Sandesh* uses headlines to provoke, communalise and terrorise people. On 28th Feb 2002 the main headline says: 70

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HINDUS BURNT ALIVE IN GODHRA. Another report on the front page says: AVENGE BLOOD WITH BLOOD. This is a quote from a statement issued by a VHP leader. Sandesh has simply used his words as a headline.

- In another instance on 6th March 2002 the headlines scream HINDUS BEWARE: HAJ PILGRIMS RETURN WITH A DEADLY CONSPIRACY. In reality hundreds of terrified and anxious Haj pilgrims returned accompanied with heavy police escorts to homes that could have been razed to the ground. Yet again on 8th March 2002 a news item with the headline WHEN MUSLIM LEADERS SHOUTED SLOGANS LIKE 'HINDUSTAN ZINDABAD'. The report goes on to say that the Circuit House in Baroda witnessed 'an unprecedented event' when Muslim leaders of the city got together to shout slogans like the above, and appeal for peace. The implication being that Muslims are not patriots and are therefore not usually prone to give such calls. However, given a situation where the community was/is being decimated they decided to give in and proclaim their patriotism. Muslims are consistently portrayed as anti-national as is evident in several reports.
- Most reports concerning the post-Godhra violence usually begin with a preceding sentence namely that, 'In the continuing spiral of communal rioting that broke out as a reaction to the 'demonic/barbaric etc., Godhra incident.....'. The denunciatory adjectives used liberally to describe the Godhra incident are strikingly absent in reporting the subsequent genocide. This introductory statement reinforces an hierarchy in the two sets of crimes that were/are being committed. This hierarchy has been established by the VHP and even the Chief Minister Narendra Modi when he justifies the genocide in Newtonian terms. This calls into question the supposed objectivity of Sandesh as a newspaper. Repetitive justification of the post-Godhra violence serves to neutralise the horror and injustice of the subsequent violence.
- There are several instances of misreporting.

We know for sure that the incident in Macchhipith reported on 16th March is ridden with falsity (see [Annexure](#)). We enclose our own fact-finding report along with a transcription of the Machhipith report in Sandesh. Similarly the incident of four Muslim youth being picked up for carrying arms in a Tata Sumo singularly misrepresents reality. Going by Sandesh reports it appears as though the youths had a whole cache of arms in the vehicle. The truth is that they had only one firearm and that the owner had a licence for it. We can produce a copy of the complaint filed by the person in question if need be. Likewise, there were misleading reports about Tandalja which has a large Muslim population. It also houses the largest relief camp giving shelter to more than 5000 people from the city and nearby areas. Sandesh has been deliberately spreading false information about the build up of tension and police action on the Muslims. Some members of Shanti Abhiyan live there and we know for sure that there is no tension there. In fact, on 18th March Sandesh was forced to publish a refutation issued by Shanti Abhiyan members in response to an article that there was tension in Tandalja. (See [Annexure](#))

- The most horrific acts of violence are repeatedly sensationalised with the use of a few devices. For example, large bold letters are used as headlines particularly when referring to gruesome acts like the burning alive of people. Photographs of burnt, mangled bodies are a common feature on the front page or the last page which usually carries local news (see [Annexure](#)). Most colour photos have the color of red for blood accentuated in a gory, visual fashion. Alternatively photographs of militant, trishul wielding karsevaks are splashed across the front page. Both kinds of photographs serve to instil fear or terror and to provoke intense passions and mutual hostility between the two communities.
- When reporting the death count, red stars are used for sensationalised and crude emphasis (see cuttings). For example, on 11th March 2002 headlines declared

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'TENSION IN AYODHYA' in large red letters. After the Supreme Court delivered the judgement disallowing shiladaan at Ayodhya, the newspaper proclaimed 'HEY RAM: THE SUPREME COURT'S REFUSAL' in large letters splashed across the front page on 14th March 2002. None of this can qualify as balanced or responsible reporting at a time when the city and State was facing its most turbulent and bloody period in recent history. In fact it instigates further violence as amply proved by events that have occurred since.

- Sandesh has effectively circumvented the code of conduct that disallows naming of communities involved in the violent conflagrations. Scattered across the newspaper there are numerous reports where 'mobs of religious fanatics' abducted tribal women and therefore had to face the wrath of the people, or when rumours that 'religious fanatics' were about to attack a temple caused tension in certain areas in Baroda city, which brought 'devotees' out on the street to protect their place of worship (see [Annexure](#)). Areas in the city and State with a large population of Muslims are described as 'mini-Pakistans', denoting both danger and enemy thus creating grounds for the use of the most extreme violence. Short of proclaiming 'Hinduism is in danger', Sandesh seems to very effectively spreading and deepening a sectarian mindset in a way that would do Hindutva votaries proud. However, this will not help in normalising the situation or relations between communities.
- Clearly selective usage of words and phrases serves to identify and further communalise the minds of people. More significantly and often with tragic consequences it also serves to denounce all Muslims as religious fanatics and all Hindus as devotees. In doing so entire communities are sought to be demonised or lionised disregarding the fact that both communities are heterogeneous and cannot be stereotyped in this manner. In addition, it also serves to justify, condone and valorise any kind of violence against the victims of the post-Godhra riots who are in overwhelmingly large measure impoverished Muslims across the State.
- Often the news items do not seem to have much concern about the veracity of the facts presented. There is no attempt to qualify statements or to name sources of information. On 7th March a report claims to have discovered Godhra's 'Karachi connection'. The connection being that an entire area in Karachi is named Godhra. There is no attempt to authenticate the information. Even supposing it were true how does Sandesh justify entire streets in New Jersey, US being named after Indian leaders or Indian localities. This is a clear instance of anti-minority bias being used this time to stoke fury and hatred in the minds of Hindus.
- Similarly, on 1st March 2002 the headline of a news item claims that a 'mini-Pakistan' is in existence in the Navayard area of the city. The article goes on to say that 'pockets' are being created in the city and instructs the police to take note of the reportedly 'criminal' U.P. migrant labourers who live in this area. Much mystery and terror seems to surround the term 'pockets', almost as if a small basti of Muslim migrants from UP who had their houses and hand carts burnt by a mob of over 2000 was planning a grand conspiracy in their 'pockets'. The term 'pockets' when combined with the unauthenticated information about people with criminal records living here, seems to suggest that it is a hideout of some sort which, if not wiped out could create a law and order problem. That the basti, (named Roshanpura) today lives in complete terror and has a huge question over their livelihoods, is indeed a sign that such reports are feeding into some larger machinery of which Sandesh is only a mouthpiece.
- On 1st March 2002 again there is a news report that claims that all of Sabarmati Express would have been put to flames had the train not been delayed. The headline claims: A mob of 7-8 thousand was waiting for the Sabarmati Express to arrive at Godhra. The mob was, needless to say, a mob of religious fanatics. There is no attempt to name sources or to substantiate this

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information. Given the reality that the facts of the Godhra incident are yet to come out and that there are reports about the misbehaviour and provocation of the karsevaks, such reporting casts a doubt on the intentions of the newspaper. Even more seriously when the police itself seems to be issuing contradictory statements about an ISI hand and then ruling out the possibility of ISI involvement, even castigating police officers responsible for issuing such statements, this is irresponsible reporting at best and inflammatory at worst.

These are some of the main features of the news coverage by Sandesh. The newspaper clippings and our detailed note on the reports will further corroborate these points. Sandesh's sale has reportedly fallen in recent times. It is plausible that it has been resorting to sensational and irresponsible reporting in a bid to boost sales. Whether this is true or not, Sandesh has consciously sought to project a communalised version of events and inflicted serious and long-term damage to a society already fragmented along communal lines. It has been our experience that its Baroda readers particularly Hindus frequently quote Sandesh reports to refute any arguments in favour of moderation and restoration of communal harmony. We have found that, over the past month of violence people's own experiences in their neighbourhoods as well as reports in the national media are often relied on less than Sandesh's reports. This is indicative of the influence that Sandesh has been able to wield in the present condition. We doubt the intentions of such newspapers as their coverage is deeply saffronised that it threatens to destroy all notions of responsible and balanced reportage. Strict action needs to be taken against such newspapers for flagrantly violating codes of journalistic ethics and to make them accountable to society at large.

## **1.2 GUJARAT SAMACHAR, Baroda Edition 28th February 2002 to 28th March 2002.**

### **Reports**

Main report on page 1 on 28th March: 3-4 young girls have been kidnapped.

The source of information is not mentioned. Again on page 10 there is a report of the VHP leader Kaushik Patel saying that 10 girls have been kidnapped. The reporter has not cross-

checked the information either with the IGP or Railway police. The report does not give names of any of the girls or any other details. One more report on page 2 gives details of an eye witness Hetalben, when the train reached Baroda. She said, "young girls from Amaraiwadi travelling with us are lost."

Main report says that 4 bogies of the train were torched. The report says that incident was pre-planned, based on information given by a railway employee. Names or other identity of the source does not appear.

On 2nd March there is a report that Sandesh carried a bogus newsitem.

There is no news from shelter camps nor are there any interviews with victims.

On 6th March the last page carries a report with the headline: THE PLAN WAS TO TORCH THE WHOLE TRAIN, NOT JUST ONE BOGEY. In yet another box item on last page a report states that 'a mob was ready for the second attack.' The source of the information is not mentioned. It seems that the story is based on a conversation with some Railway Police Force jawans. The way these reports have been presented is instigative. This is the day when the top story on last page is about how gradually the situation is returning to normalcy.

On 7th March the last page carries a newsitem presented in a box that claims that '...ISI is creating trouble in Gujarat, Kalota and his colleagues are important links, Dy. Commander of 'Huji' arrested in Calcutta has confessed the conspiracy.' The report uses the term 'Rambhakt' several times for the travellers on board Sabarmati Express on the fateful day.

On 6th March the headline of a report says, 'Torching of the train at Godhra was pre-planned. Kalotta was tipped by a railway officer how to cut open the vacuum pipes'. Source of information not mentioned.

Caption of a story on last page, 7th March: What was purpose of the youths roaming in white Tata Sumo with 12 bore rifle in position. The sub heading cries: They carried news clippings of the Godhra incident being pre-planned.

The report of the Chief Minister's visit to Baroda carries the caption : 'Mysteries of the Godhra conspiracy are opening up slowly..' However, the story does not open up a single mystery. (Page 3, 8-3-02)

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Another newsitem presents a story in the first person singular form. A girl who saved herself from the torched bogey narrates how she could do it, '....The mob tried to pull me out, but could not succeed...' She adds firmly while sobbing, 'sacrifice and hard work put up by my parents would not go waste'. (Last page, 8-3-02)

Indiscriminate firing from Fatehganj Mosque: the headline of an 8 column story on page 8 on 16th March.

Main accused Bilal Haji is described as 'SUTRADHAR' even before the trial.

A report on 16th March describes incidents in Machchhipith as if only Muslims were culprits. The headline claims 'private firing on Rambhakts'. The report goes on to describe the whole incident as a pre-planned attack. Nowhere is it mentioned if the Ram Dhun procession was taken out with police permission and what were the conditions laid out by police for taking out such a procession. The role played by the mob in the procession is not at all mentioned.

In a Sunday supplement, an article by Bhalchandra Jani justifies demand for Ram Janmabhoomi temple.

Page 1 of 18th March carries a photograph of bombs recovered by police during combing operations in Danilimda area of Ahmedabad. The caption says: People talking of secularism should be asked if protecting criminals is secularism.

On 20th March, three anti-Muslim stories have been published. Headings run like this: 'Even in Pakistan madrassas are being controlled, why not then in Gujarat?' 'Order for removing loud speakers from mosques. Anti-India Literature and cassettes recovered from Kheda district.' 'Illegal madrassas operating in Gujarat in the guise of religion and educational activities.

A report on page 10 of 21st March reads: 'Mob of 1000 encircled LIC building from all sides with a plan that mirrors Godhra' This is a 3 column 50 word story which repeats the phrase 'pre-planned like Godhra' five times. The story is highly exaggerated. Another story just below this has similar qualities. It reads: 'Plan to torch 2 autorickshaws carrying 30 school children studying in English Medium school in Modasa prevented by the police.' This report too is exaggerated and inflammatory.

'Sat kaival temple receives threat: Sarsa

temple and pathshala threatened to be blown using remote control.' The story seems to be exaggerated. (P.1, 24-03-02)

'Possibility of weapon attack. Secret agencies receive information; Religious and Educational institutions shall be targeted. All DSPs alerted.' –report on p.2, 24-03-02

Sabarmati Express incident was nothing but a pre-planned incident. Several youths would be ready to commit crimes on just one signal from Bilal (last page, 26-03-02)

Police out to nab Nisar, who has conspired to kill large numbers of people.

### **Headings and Layout**

For first 3 days the reports start from above the title of the Newspaper.

Sub-heading of the report on p.2 reads: "Women, who got down from the bogey, after it was torched, were taken away i.e. kidnapped.

Photograph of a woman karsevak exhibiting a sword held in her hand while travelling to Ayodhya from Jharkhand. (P.10, 15-3-02)

Cartoon on page.10 on 16th March is inflammatory.

Cartoon on editorial page is inflammatory. It describes Human Right Commission as Danav Adhikar Sangh.

### **About Godhra**

History of communal conflicts in Godhra. The story narrates incidents of 1948.

Pro-Pakistan elements in Godhra have frequently created terror since 1927, but administration fails to wake up to this. (P.2, 5th March) 'Terror of fundamentalists in Godhara dates back to pre-independence era.'(last page, 23-03-02.)

### **Positive Stories**

Muslims saved a Hindu shopkeeper's shop in Halol ( P.5, 2nd March).

Residents of Ram-Rahim tekra in Ahmedabad is an example of communal harmony (p.1, 5-3-02). Hindus saved life of a Muslim woman in Halol ( P.5, 5th March).

No one wants riots. Rare scenes of communal harmony in sensitive areas of city (Last page, 6-3-02).

Elol village near Himmatnagar is an example of communal harmony (p.5, 6-3-02).

A Muslim woman offered shelter to a Hindu family (P.3, 7-3-02).

At Bhoj village in Padara taluka, Muslims

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were given shelter in a temple. (P.8, 7-3-02).

“Oh! He is our Rahim Chacha...our guruji..and they saved him (P.11, 10-3-02).

Article by Bhaven Kachchhi in Sunday supplement.

At Lilapir Dargah of Talaja, devotees include all- Hindus and Muslims. (P.5, 11-03-02).

A Muslim old woman saved from mob by a Hindu youth.’(p.2, 22-3-02).

A pregnant lady sent to Hospital by a Muslim youth taking risk of his life. (28-03-02).

### **1.3 GUJARAT TODAY**

Gujarat Today is an eleven-year old Gujarati daily with a circulation of 70,000. It is published by the Lokhit Prakashan Trust of Ahmedabad. The paper was started by Muslim liberals and is probably the only daily which has a large Muslim readership. The print quality of the paper is low. Photographs are not very clear and there are no colour photographs. The paper carries news from villages and district towns not generally covered by the mainstream media.

It is important to analyse the role played by Gujarat Today given that it caters to the very section of people in Gujarat affected by the state-wide violence following the Godhra incident and undoubtedly plays an important role in giving information and building opinion among Muslims. In this report we have covered the period from 28th February 2002 to 16th March 2002. One limitation in our analysis was that we were unable to access the issues of 1-5 March, and also the first and last pages of 28 February. Nonetheless, we feel that a broad picture emerges from our analysis which is indicative of the editorial policy the paper has followed through the critical situation faced by the Muslim community in Gujarat since 28 February.

#### **1. Report on the Godhra Incident (28 February)**

The paper reports that the karsewaks caught hold of some Muslim tea-vendors at Godhra station and forced them to say ‘Jai Shri Ram’ which sparked off the incident. This is also highlighted in a box on another page. The paper, in contrast to the more temperate language of its later reports, says that when the Sabarmati Express arrived at Vadodara station, ...‘the saffron mob of Bajrang Dal and VHP ran like dogs, attacking people with their swords... the karsewaks got down from the train shouting slogans like ‘Har Har Mahadev, Bharat Mata ki

Jai’ and filthy abuses ...‘Kill Muslims, cut Muslims...’ The paper also carried a report and photograph of the Hindu youth Arun Paswan who was also attacked at Vadodara railway station.

What surprised us was that the editorial of the 28th focused exclusively and in great detail on the railway budget announced the previous day. There was no reference to the Godhra incident. Since we did not have the entire paper of the 28th, we are unaware whether the incident was condemned elsewhere in the issue of the 28th. However, we feel that an editorial comment on the incident was due, and the editorial provided the most appropriate space to project the paper’s viewpoint on the incident.

#### **2. Information**

The paper has been providing important and useful information for its readers. Some of these are :

- Details of phone and fax nos. of police control rooms in Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Godhra. These were issued on the 28th itself to enable victims and relatives of injured persons to contact the police for information.
- Details of relief camps in Ahmedabad - their location, kinds of facilities available (as well as those necessary) in the camps, as also appeals for assistance.
- Reports and updates of incidents in the state. These reports are detailed, and include the names of attacked shops and their owners.

#### **3. Investigative Reports**

The paper has carried detailed investigative reports of the violence. Some of these are:

- Details on conditions of people in the relief camps, including issues of legal assistance, marriages organised and deliveries of babies in the camps (6th March);
- Investigation into the Naroda Patiya incident, with details relating to the procurement of petrol, diesel and gas cylinders used for burning;
- Use of the inflammable chemical ‘Lakgel’ for burning (8 March). This has not been reported in any other paper.

#### **4. Reports of Communal Harmony through the Violence**

Most of the space in the newspaper over the first two weeks was devoted to extensive reportage

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on the carnage. However, space was made available every day to profile incidents of communal harmony.

Given the terror, insecurity and alienation that Muslims in Gujarat felt over those first few weeks of violence following Godhra, it is commendable that Gujarat Today consciously sought to project the more humane side of inter-community relationships to its Muslim readers through these reports. For example, there was a report on how the lives and properties of 175 Muslims of Naroda in Ahmedabad were protected by the local shepherds; how Hindu doctors of Bhavnagar saved properties from burning and made efforts to treat the injured; relief of foodgrain and clothes provided by Hindus to victims in Jhagadia; and a group marriage of Hindu and Muslim youth in Mangrol.

Also reported was news of Prantij, where a woman sarpanch successfully stopped riots occurring in her village. The March 8 edition gives news related to peace committees in Vagra, Palej, Dholka and Bharuch. On 10th March, the paper had a report on how Hindu families saved the lives of 15 Muslims in Kavitha village near Borsad. While there are reports of Juhapura, where Hindus were saved by Muslims, there is also a report on how looting of both Hindus and Muslims took place.

The 12th March issue carries news of a Hindu family of Dehgam who sheltered 20 Muslims in their house, and a boxed item on a relief camp in Bhalej village, Kheda district, run by Hindus and Muslims. The 15th March issue carries a report of how Muslim women saved the lives of Hindus. News of unity among Hindus and Muslims of Lambadia and Sami are reported in other issues of the paper.

#### **5. Role of the Police**

The paper has attempted to maintain a balanced perspective on the role of the police over the first two and a half weeks of communal violence. Maintenance of peace in Padra is attributed to the local police, while the arrest of 28 Muslim youths in Vadodara is strongly criticised. There is a report on Varnama where the police refused to entertain complaints against specific individuals. However, the arrest of a VHP functionary in Kutch is lauded.

#### **6. Analytical and Editorial Reports**

Barring the absence of editorial comment in the

28th February issue on the previous day's incident at Godhra, we feel that Gujarat Today has maintained a good balance in its editorials and commentaries on the Gujarat violence. These include several editorials reflecting concern with the fall-out of the riots and how their effects might be mitigated. The editorials over the editions surveyed did not always address the communal riots/violence. Editorials on only five of the thirteen days were about the violence in the state.

The paper has carried commentaries by prominent liberal intellectuals and humanists of Gujarat, such as an article by Mahesh Dave which fearlessly reprimands the government for its role in the riots (8th March), a translation of a Siddharth Vardarajan article which had appeared in the TOI (9th March), accounts by Indu Kumar Jani (in his Sunday column) of the kinds of materials supplied to relief camps, and articles by Nagindas Sanghvi titled: "India will be destroyed not by the atom bomb but by superstition and communal fanaticism" (7th March) and "Ram gave up Ayodhya and the throne, but his followers are prepared to shed blood" (16th March).

An interesting report we came across was based on interviews with older people who had experienced the 1969 riots, the worst the state had previously witnessed (8th March, p.7). The article concluded that the present riot were worse than the '69 riots.

#### **7. Conclusions**

Based on a quick and by no means exhaustive analysis of coverage of the riots by Gujarat Today from 28th February to 16th March, we feel that the paper has, on the whole, managed to maintain a good balance in its reporting, and has been fair and even-handed in its commentaries. This is more significant since Gujarat Today is a Muslim-owned paper which is primarily read by Muslims. The paper has been restrained in its reporting and its choice of visuals, temperate in its language and has eschewed shrill and potentially provocative matter. Where rumours were mentioned, they have been presented as such and not captioned with misleading headlines, as was done by some other newspapers. It has regularly carried items highlighting interdependence of communities and incidents of help and co-operation extending across community barriers. It has investigated incidents and carried detailed information which did not

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appear in other newspapers, thereby providing a useful service to its readers.

Overall, our analysis suggests that Gujarat Today has played a responsible and positive role during the violence in the state, for which it deserves to be commended.

## **2. THE ENGLISH PRESS**

We have looked at the two English daily newspapers in circulation in Baroda – The Times of India (Ahmedabad edition) and the local supplement Baroda Times, and the Indian Express (Vadodara), and its local supplement Vadodara Newslite. While Baroda Times has generally been guided by a youth-and-entertainment perspective, it has also, over the past year, carried several reports on the local history of the city. Vadodara Newslite, on the other hand, has been more local news-based.

Both papers, in our view, have been fairly balanced in their reporting. In both cases, there appears to have been an editorial policy in place explicitly directed towards non-sectarian and non-inflammatory coverage of post-Godhra events in Baroda.

Incidents were not sensationalised by provocative headlines (as happened in the case of some local Gujarati papers). In both cases, although communities were named in many cases, no pejorative and inflammatory terms were used as has been the case with Sandesh; rather the term ‘mob’ was repeatedly used.

The choice of photographs in both papers was sober. Both papers desisted from showing dead/mutilated bodies, or close-ups of the injured. Photographs have generally been of people in hospitals, areas under curfew, individuals and families affected by the riots with accompanying interviews.

For the first 10 days after the Godhra incident, there were follow-up stories, including investigative and analytical reports. On March 3, TOI (p.3) carried interviews with a few relatives of victims of the Godhra incident, some of whom counselled restraint while others urged revenge.

Both papers have referred to rumours, naming them as such, and not passing them off as facts. However, sources of rumours and their effects on the prevailing situation in localities have not been adequately investigated by either paper.

Editorials in both papers have been critical

of the violence and government inaction/collusion of the state machinery.

Both papers carried a number of interviews with victims of particular incidents of violence in Baroda, rather than relying exclusively on police handouts.

A number of articles featured examples of communal harmony and interdependence: these include instances of Hindus helping Muslim neighbours; of affected families in which there were intercommunity marriages; and profiles of places of worship in Baroda which were venerated by both Muslims and Hindus.

While incidents in rural areas were reported, these were generally less extensively covered and investigated

We feel that Indian Express’s Vadodara Newslite should be commended for its coverage of incidents in the city, and Times of India’s Baroda Times for its attempts to create – through interviews and reports over the first two weeks of the violence – a sense of secular concern for the city.

We feel that, while the overall reporting has been by and large satisfactory, there have been some shortcomings; perhaps some of these can be attributed to the difficult situation and the constraints (including physical threats) on reporting particularly by the English language press. Some of the areas/incidents which have been poorly covered are : combing operations by the police, which have been grossly biased against Muslims; police atrocities against women (most of which also occurred during combing operations); conditions in relief camps, and involvement of persons named by the people in various areas.

Indian Express has done a fairly intensive coverage of the riots through investigative reports, analytical articles and editorials. However, there are two examples which may be considered to be in questionable taste: one was the headline of March 24, which read “Dial M for Modi, Murder?”, and the daily tally displayed on the first page over the first two weeks (?) which was titled ‘Modimeter’.

## **ANNEXURE**

### **SANDESH HEADLINES AND REPORTS**

**28th February, 2002.**

#### **Page 1**

1. 70 HINDUS BURNT ALIVE IN GODHRA.

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2. SABARMATI EXPRESS BRINGING RAMSEVAKS FROM AYODHYA BURNT BY A VIOLENT MOB.

3. Photograph of burnt bogey and dead bodies with the caption: Peace In Flames. Flaming attack by violent, anti-national elements, more than 60 Hindu brothers and sisters burnt alive.

4. AVENGE BLOOD WITH BLOOD. The headline quotes the VHP leader from Dholka Rajendra Shah who says that the 'Hindu samaj will have sharp reactions to the killing of innocent ramsevak. We will have to avenge blood with blood', says Rajendra Shah.

#### Page 2

1. THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR [of Godhra] SAID ONLY ONE THING: THIS IS THE HANDIWORK OF ANTI SOCIAL ELEMENTS. THIS IS THE SORRY STATE OF THE ADMINISTRATION. The Godhra District Collector is being criticised here for not attributing the train massacre to Muslims, who are anti-national according to various Sandesh reports.

2. THE DEAD ARE NOT MERE RAM SEVAKS, THEY ARE THE HEIRS OF RANA PRATAP, GURU GOVIND SINGH.

**Analysis:** The Ram Sevaks are being valorised here, and their lineage being traced to Rana Pratap et al. On the whole Sandesh has conferred upon the Ram Sevaks the status of martyrs, and has consistently referred to the massacre as a 'balidaan', (sacrifice)

#### Page 3

1. THE VICTIMS MASS MURDERS: 10-15 GIRLS WERE PULLED OUT BY RELIGIOUS FANATICS: 10-The report says: 15 girls were dragged out of the Sabarmati Express, this is being hotly discussed in Godhra. As a result there is tension. The survivors of this incident also said this. The police is also trying to look for this. These girls were trying to escape from the train, police has denied it, but Kaushik Patel of VHP has accused.

2. MUSLIM LEADER PREVENTED THE FIRE ENGINE BY BRANDISHING AN OPEN SWORD. The fire brigade learnt of the fire at nine O'clock and rushed to the spot soon after. But at that very moment a local Muslim

leader armed with an open sword appeared and prevented the fire brigade from putting out the fire. Other religious fanatics joined them and an atmosphere of communal tension/discord spread in the entire Godhra city.

3. ABOUT 10 YOUNG GIRLS WERE PULLED OUT FROM THE RAILWAY CARRIAGE BY A GROUP OF RELIGIOUS FANATICS. The newsitem goes on to refute the headline.

**Analysis:** What is the intention in having such headlines if not to provoke? On 2nd March Gujarat Samachar another Gujarati newspaper said that this report was false.

4. THIS IS THE UNHOLY ACT OF THOSE WHO WANT TO BREAK THE COURAGE OF KARSEVAKS: KAUSHIK PATEL

#### Page 8-9

1. Photographs of the Godhra carnage spread out over two pages. Centrefold.

2. News report with headline: 8-10 WOMEN DRAGGED INTO BASTI.

**Analysis:** The report says nothing about this incident except for a passing reference in the last paragraph. Why have a headline as provocative as this?

3. TERRORISM WITHIN THE BORDERS: IT HAS BEEN GOING ON IN GODHRA FOR YEARS.

#### Page 10

1. DO THE TC, DRIVER, AND IN-CHARGE STATION MASTER [OF THE SABARMATI EXPRESS] BELONG TO A CERTAIN COMMUNITY? Accusation by VHP. This made the situation more tense in Godhra.

**Analysis :** This was basically a rumour that Sandesh has picked on and sensationalise, adding to the tension in Godhra and elsewhere.

2. THE GODHRA INCIDENT IS REMINISCENT OF CHENGIZ KHAN'S ATROCITIES.

#### Page 13

1. TODAY'S RESOLVE: JINNAH'S HEIRS IN GODHRA HAVE TO BE PUNISHED. Article by Hari Desai.

The article purports to go back in history to Partition and the role Jinnah played. It accuses Jinnah of threatening the minority community in Pakistan to convert or face the ire of the State, a policy that is still being followed. It also refers to how the minority community in Bangladesh is

being treated: Taslima Nasreen has written about the gang-rapes of minority women there. Today in India after the burning of the Sabarmati Express the issue is not that of the interests of the minority community here or about Hindu liberalism. It is a conspiracy against the nation. Those responsible for this repulsive act have to be punished and exposed before the nation. The burning of the train can only be seen as a well-planned strategy to destabilise Gujarat. Some elements were not happy with the fact that Gujarat was free of communal tension under the BJP. So these anti-nationals instigated Muslim against the karsevaks who had gone to Ayodhya as part of the VHP programme for construction of the Ram Mandir. The concluding paragraph says that Hindus have been attacked, every action will have a reaction. The next few days will see this. The last sentence is: For how long will we tolerate this?

**1st March, 2002.**

**Page 1**

1. GUJARAT BURNS: CALL FOR BHARAT BANDH TODAY. 118 DEAD.

**Comment :** The headline is splashed across the page in large red letters. A red star is drawn around the death count.

2. HORRIFIC REACTIONS TO THE GODHRA INCIDENT: MORE THAN 50 PERSONS BURNT ALIVE. Many places of worship targeted. Numerous incidents of petrol and acid bomb-throwing.
3. 70 BURNT ALIVE IN CHAMANPURA, AHMEDABAD.
4. A CAR PASSING THROUGH KHEDIA VILLAGE NEAR KALOL WAS STOPPED BY A MOB, A GIRL WAS ABDUCTED.

**Analysis:** None of these headlines choose to condemn this violence.

5. BURNT ALIVE IN DEROL, KALOL IN PANCHMAHALS. The report states: 'People bent on avenging yesterday's mass murder burnt 6 men of a certain community alive'.

**Analysis:** The avengers here are seen to be justified in their acts of violence. There is no mention of letting the law take its course, no censure against such acts of violence.

**Page 2**

1. PAKISTANI NATIONAL ARRESTED BY RPF IN CHANCHALAV RAILWAY STATION. The report says: Suspicion of Pakistani agency ISI's involvement in the

demonic Godhra incident.

**Page 3:**

1. A MASJID AND 3 FACTORIES BURNT IN ANKLESHWAR

**Page 5**

1. STATION MASTER ALSO INVOLVED IN THE SENSATIONAL GODHRA MASSACRE.

**Page 15**

1. THE GODHRA INCIDENT IS NOT COMMUNALISM IT IS THE BLACK SHADOW OF TERRORISM.

**Page 10**

1. 'POCKETS' OF MINI-PAKISTAN IN NAVAYARD. The report says that 'pockets' of a certain community are being created in Navayard. The police ought to take note of this(!)

People from UP have settled here. They possess illegal ration cards and could be criminals running from the law.

**Page 16**

1. THE BODIES OF TWO HINDU GIRLS WHO WERE ABDUCTED FROM SABARMATI EXPRESS FOUND NEAR KALOL IN A BAD CONDITION.

The report says the girls were raped and then cut up, sprayed with petrol and the bodies were burnt. There is also talk about the body of a third girl having been found: There is a limit to barbarity'.

**Analysis :** This report is mischievous in the extreme because of its explosive content and because there is no attempt to verify this, no sources have been quoted. This report was later denounced as false by Gujarat Samachar, another Gujarati daily.

*Sandesh* does not see fit to speak of the limits of violence being inflicted on the Muslim community throughout the State. While the mob in Godhra is 'demonic', 'diabolical', 'evil' the violence perpetrated on thousands of innocent Muslims in Panchmahals is not condemned. Unverified newsreports of this sort are provocative in the extreme and can instigate further violence.

**Page 16**

1. RELIGIOUS FANATICS STAGE ARMED ATTACK ON WAGHODIA ROAD.

The report says that a group of armed religious fanatics attacked Chandranagar on

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Waghodia Road. The air was rent with cries of women and children. A group of youths from a neighbouring locality intervened. But for that there would have been a second Godhra.

**Analysis:** The report is provocative in the extreme and stokes hostility. No sources are quoted. If an incident was indeed averted why is it that the newspaper sees fit to report something like this in such a blatantly communal manner? Throughout the report there are assumptions about the murderous intention of the crowd of 'religious fanatics' and the alacrity with which Hindu youths prevented this. There are doubts about the veracity of this incident.

#### 2nd March, 2002

##### Front page, top right

1. Photograph of burnt, mangled bodies. Provocative in the extreme.
2. RIOTS IN AHMEDABAD UNCONTROLLABLE. 250 give up their lives in uninterrupted violence. The people who died were killed, why should Sandesh seek to justify this?
3. ADIVASIS ON THE WARPATH AFTER FUNDAMENTALISTS/FANATICS ABDUCT AND MURDER ADIVASI GIRLS.

The report says a religious place was attacked and people cut to pieces in Pandarva village.

**Analysis:** Muslims being seen as fanatics. The report justifies the tribal attack on the religious place. There is no substantive reporting of abduction or murder of adivasi girls, this is just a piece of information loosely inserted into the report. There are no mention of sources, nothing about where and how the information was received.

4. PAKISTAN IS NOTHING BEFORE INDIA. IF INDIA SO DECIDES THERE WILL BE NO SIGN OF PAKISTAN: FERNANDES.

**Analysis:** Jingoistic.

##### Page 2

1. PERHAPS THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE [IN BARODA]: 4 factories burnt in Sardar Estate by an unruly mob. Destruction worth lakhs of rupees. Flames engulfed the factories burned for 6-7 hours.
2. ATTEMPT TO BURN CHANCHALAV RAILWAY STATION NEAR GODHRA.

The report says that a mob of religious fanatics started fires near the Chanchalav railway station to free a Pakistani citizen.

**Analysis:** No sources quoted, no verification.

##### Page 10

1. JALARAM TEMPLE IN CITY TO BE ATTACKED: RUMOURS CAUSE DEVOTEES TO GATHER HERE. The report says that hundreds of 'devotees' gathered at the famous Jalaram temple in Karelibaug after hearing rumours that it would be attacked by religious fundamentalists.

BAPUNAGAR REELS UNDER BLIND PRIVATE FIRING ALL DAY. IF YOU DO NOT KILL THE ENEMY THEY WILL KILL YOU. Agar tum ne dushman ko nahi mara to woh tumhe mar dega (written in Hindi).

**Analysis:** Extremely provocative: aggressive Hindu posturing. This kind of a headline breeds and instigates further violence.

2. Photographs on the last page of burnt bodies.

**Analysis:** Provocative.

#### 3rd March, 2002

##### Page 1

1. Photographs with caption: Bodies burnt in Mehsana.

**Analysis:** This set of photographs are in bad taste and is extremely provocative.

##### Page 2

1. 72 HOURS AFTER THE GODHRA MASSACRE VADODARA DISTRICT IN FLAMES. A mob of 700 attacked a religious place in Sakheda village and burnt two houses.

**Analysis:** 'Mob' here does not say religious fanatics, so presumably this is a Hindu mob.

##### Page 3

1. IT IS SAID THAT SOME 'NAR PISCHACHIS' (demons) INVOLVED IN THE GODHRA MASSACRE ARE SEEKING SHELTER IN TULSIWADI AREA. Another issue being discussed hotly is that there is a posse of arms hidden in the nooks and crannies in the portion of the Vishwamitri river valley that passes by Tulsiwadi.

**Analysis:** This entire article is based on rumours and in fact gives substance to them. Very provocative and instigates violence.

##### Page 8

1. A FRENZIED MOB WITH A FUNERAL

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PROCESSION OF ONE RAJU BARIA IN SAVLI VILLAGE WHO DIED IN FIRING ATTACKED SHOPS, HOUSES, CABINS. The report says: the mob was shouting slogans like, 'Rajubhai Amar raho', 'Rajubhai hum Ayodhya jayenge', 'Rammandir banega'.

**Analysis:** Why print such slogans in an already explosive situation? The intentions of the newspaper are questionable.

**Last page**

1. Photographs of bodies.

**Analysis:** Both sets of photographs are disturbing in the extreme instigation fear, terror and communal anger.

**5th March 2002**

**Page 5**

1. A report says that 'those who burnt a 17 year old alive wore a 'Pathani' dress'.

**Analysis:** The implication here is that it was a Muslim who committed the act. In an atmosphere so vitiated by communal passions this detail has been deliberately added to stoke communal hostility.

**Page 9**

1. PAKISTANS' EFFORT TO INSTIGATE RIOTS IN INDIA UNDER THE NAME OF 'OPERATION'. Pakistan's military rulers want to use Indian citizens in their devious plot to fan communal tension here.

**Analysis:** Completely unsubstantiated and provocative in the extreme.

**Page 12**

1. MEHSANA'S MOULVI GIVES A CALL TO: FACE THE 'KAFIRS', FINISH THEM, 'ALLAH HO AKBAR' IN ASHAPURI IN NAVAYARD.

**Analysis:** The Moulvi in question is from Kota, not Mehsana and the call he gave from the loudspeaker was a warning that the basti was to be attacked and that women and children should seek the shelter of the house. The loudspeaker has been since confiscated and it is the sound of 'aartis' from the neighbouring Hindu basti that prevails in the mornings and evenings today. These are facts that PUCL and Shanti Abhiyan teams have found out after visits to the area. Sandesh has indulged in wilful mis-reporting and the news item is riddled with factual errors. This puts into question the veracity of Sandesh reportage.

**6th March, 2002**

**Page 1**

1. HINDUS BEWARE: HAJ PILGRIMS RETURN WITH DEADLY PLANS TO ATTACK.

**7th March, 2002**

**Page 8**

1. NOT JUST PEACE: RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE NECESSARY: THE GODHRA MASSACRE: PREPLANNED CONSPIRACY?

The report says even if the karsevaks travelling the train were shouting provocative slogans they should not have been burnt like this. People's anger exploded, it is but natural. Every action has a reaction. This is a natural thing. If we talk about the police, after all the police are a part of society. For how long will they remain aloof from popular sentiment? What can 5-10 police men do to control frenzied mobs of 500.

**Page 14**

1. GODHRA : THE MINI-PAKISTAN'S KARACHI CONNECTION. Report claims that Karachi has an entire area named Godhra.

**8th March 2002.**

**Page 1**

1. THE VHP IS SOFT ON THE MANDIR ISSUE, BUT MUSLIMS ARE STILL ANGRY. (VHP naram to Muslim garam)

2. WHEN MUSLIM LEADERS SHOUTED SLOGANS LIKE 'HINDUSTAN ZINDABAD'. The report goes on to say that the Circuit House in Baroda witnessed an unprecedented event when Muslim leaders of the city got together to shout slogans like the above, and appeal for peace.

**9th March, 2002**

**Page 1**

1. MOBSTERS STILL DO NOT LIKE PEACE? News report with a photograph of a dead calf's head in a plastic bag. The news report asks: Who has done it? The report goes on to say that it was a dog that had dragged the body of the calf into a street.

**Analysis:** What was the intention of the newspaper in splashing a photograph like this on the front page? Was it to deliberately foment trouble?

**Page 7**

1. 4 YOUTHS WITH RIFLES ESCAPED IN A

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TATA SUMO FROM THE CURFEW RIDDEN FATEHPURA AREA. The report goes on to say that these youngsters then made calls on their mobile phone to Calcutta, Bombay, Bangalore after reaching Tandalja.

2. PRIME ACCUSED IN THE GODHRA CARNAGE IS HIDING IN BOMBAY AND WAITING TO ESCAPE ABROAD.

**Analysis:** When there is such tension and at such sensitive moments, printing headlines without much verification points to dubious intentions.

**Page 16**

1. A report tells the readers that in 1948 people from Pakistan set the Tricolour on fire in Godhra's Iqbal High School. A teacher who shouted Vande Materam was thrown out of the school.

**Analysis:** The only objective of recalling and re-printing this kind of information at a time like this is to fuel the fire.

**15th March 2002**

**Page 1**

1. DHARMAYUDH IN AYODHYA.  
The report starts with an assertion that, 'there will be a dharama yudh in Ayodhya between 'bhakti' and 'shakti'.

2. Parmahans' threat to commit suicide appears four times on the front page.

3. PROHIBITION OF PUJA ON ALL MANDIRS ON 67 ACRES DISPUTED LAND

**Analysis:** There could have given a less inflammatory headline.

**Page 14**

1.4 ARMED YOUTH CAUGHT IN THE SENSATIONAL TATA SUMO CASE RELEASED ON 5 DAYS REMAND.

**Analysis:** There are no such reports about Hindus being arrested.

**Page 4**

1. There is a tiny news item in corner about a meeting on communal harmony in Rustompura village.

**Page 5**

1. Banner headline: IN THE NAME OF SHELTER MIGRANTS FROM OTHER VILLAGES ENTER CITY. The report warns that moves to set up Muslim colonies overnight on Municipal Corporation land in Tandalja, Wadi, Akota. It also says that

victims of riots from nearby villages in Vadodara who have come here, some Muslim leaders have used their political connections to set up illegal colonies on Corporation land. Information about dangerous activities have come to the fore in these colonies. The VMC also knows about this. Rehabilitation is only an excuse.

**Analysis:** The truth is that these are relief camps where terrified Muslim victims have taken shelter. The anti-Muslim bias of the newspaper is in full and virulent display when it purports to expose the 'dangerous activities' that are going on in these relief camps.

2. SADHUS DEMONSTRATE IN FRONT OF VMC OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF MUTTON SHOPS COMING UP IN FRONT OF THE ISKON TEMPLE. The report says Hindu religiosity will be instigated if this is not stopped and an Andolan will begin. In a box in the same article it says, sadhus chanting of 'Hare Krishna, Hare Rama' transformed the Municipal Corporation into a religious spot. A footnote says, 'the Municipal Commissioner and Mayor faced the blazing question of the sadhus...What if a masjid is built in front of the mandir? There is constant reference to Hindu citizens and Hindu devotees.

**Page 6**

1. The editorial compares the VHP and RSS. The RSS is much stronger than VHP. If the Mandir Andolan has to be carried on properly and with a long term perspective then it is not possible without the support of the RSS. The VHP accepts this.

2. THE SC JUDGEMENT ANGERS HINDUS: 'TALK OF THE TOWN'. Will there be a 1992 action replay in Ayodhya today? In box: The government allows Muslims to read namaz during office hours and Hindus are prohibited from performing puja.

**Page 16**

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN AYODHYA TODAY? CITIZENS IN SUSPENDED LIMBO.

**Analysis :** The headline makes to create anxiety and terror.

**16th March 2002**

**Page 1**

HOLI OF VIOLENCE IN BARODA. Large

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red letters. Written with death count and number of injured in large numbers. The entire page is filled with news about violence in Baroda, and the Ayodhya issue.

**Analysis :** The headline almost jubilantly proclaims the violence that claimed the city on 15th March 2002

**Page 2**

2. Ramdhun programmes highlighted in various parts of the district. Muslims had already finished their namaz before the Ramdhun began.

**Analysis :** No mention of Muslim fears. They have inserted this bit of information to sensationalise the reading of the namaz. In an atmosphere of such violence the newspaper could have easily exercised restraint. The Ram Dhun programmes are almost posed as a victory.

**Page 3**

1. VIOLENT MOB RAZES DARGAH NEAR SAYAJI HOSPITAL. The report has two photographs : one of policemen surrounding the razed dargah, and another of Hanuman idols installed there. The report stresses that the dargah was razed as a result of the 'private firing' in the Macchipith area of the city.
2. MACCHIPITH VIOLENCE LEADS TO A MOB LOOTING AND SETTING FIRE TO SHOPS NEAR NATRAJ CINEMA.

**Analysis :** The violence in Macchipith is now being used to justify the orgy of violence that followed much like the way in which Godhra has been consistently used to justify the genocide.

3. STONE PELTING ON THOSE GOING TO GIVE CONDOLENCES TO THE PEOPLE KILLED IN THE GODHRA MASSACRE IN BALASINOR. 3 Hindu youths stabbed.

**Analysis :** Mention of Hindu youth, there is never such mention when Muslims are stabbed or attacked. This is designed to deliberately stoke communal passions.

**Page 5**

1. RAMDHUN IN RAMESHWAR MANDIR. THOUSANDS OF DEVOTEES PARTICIPATE.

**Analysis :** Once more there is glorification of the Ram Dhun programme. Hindus as devotees as compared to Muslims as fanatics

**Page 7**

1. MUSLIMS ATTACK RANAVAS IN

KADIYAWAD, DABHOI.

Inset box : Why did a kerosene tanker go to a Muslim area before the attack on the Ranawas, ask the residents of Dabhoi. The report says that a kerosene tanker went into Kadiawad area and kerosene was distributed in the area.

**Analysis :** What is the intention of this news item? It is a routine matter that kerosene tankers go into all residential areas. Kerosene is the main fuel for household purposes. There is a deliberate slant here meant to distort facts.

2. 'YOU HAVE PLAYED YOUR ONE DAY MATCH, WE WILL NOW PLAY A 5 DAY MATCH.' Two communities on warpath in Wadi, one of the communities threatened the other saying this.

**Analysis :** Why is such a threat being highlighted? The CM Narendra Modi is also said to have made references to cricket matches in another context. Does this mean that Hindus threatened the Muslim promising to wreck havoc? The headline is instigative.

**Page 9**

Photographs all over the page. One of them has a congratulatory caption that says: 'women chanting the ramdhun'.

**Page 13**

1. Box in article: THE SACRIFICE AND STRUGGLE FOR THE RAMJANMABOOMI. The article gives a history of the Ram Janmabhoomi 'struggle' in which 3 lakh Hindus have died since the 15th century.

**Analysis :** Dubious. There is no mention of sources. The article is meant to foment trouble.

**Page 14**

1. RSS STATEMENT: WE HAVE NO RELATIONS WITH BJP. The post-Godhra violence was a natural reaction of the Hindus.

**Analysis :** Constant reiteration of post-Godhra violence as a reaction.

**Page 15**

1. YOUTH FROM VASNA MERCILESSLY ATTACKED IN JUHAPURA. The report describes how a mob came into Juhapura. This man was returning from work and he was surrounded and attacked. In the meantime a jeep entered the lane, saw the mob and sped straight into the mob dispersing it. The driver rescued the youth and made off from there.

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**Analysis:** This is a positive incident where the man was rescued by the jeep driver at great risk. The article and the headline chooses instead to highlight the attack rather than the rescue.

**Page 16**

1. HEADLINE: ANGRY MUSLIMS FIRE ON AND ATTACK RAMSHOBHA YATRA. What happened in Macchhipith that caused the city to burn?

The report says: In the afternoon the city was infused with spirit of Ram. Women, children and youth burst into the main roads, Ram had suffused the city. At a time like this the entire city was plunged into violence because of the attack by the fanatics of Macchhipith. When a shobha yatra emerged in the Raopura area in the afternoon chanting Ramdhun, people were dancing and chanting Ram. Everybody was immersed in devotional sprit. The police was also present. The shobha yatra reached the Macchhipith crossing. Dhols and manjiras were played.

At Suryanarayan Baug an acid bulb shot out from a rooftop in Macchhipith. The ram bhakts of the shobha yatra looked towards Macchhipith to see where the acid bombs were coming from. And an armed mob was spotted. They had swords and were shouting. The women in the shobha yatra ran in panic. The youth ran towards the police. But by then a shower of acid bulbs was raining down from not one but five rooftops in Macchhipith. There was the armed mob down on the streets and up on the rooftops were acid bulbs raining down.

Violence disrupts bhakti ras (the spirit of devotion) and mobs face each other. The Macchhipith mob comes forward taking advantage of the 'coverage fire' of acid bulbs from the rooftops. Stones, bottles rain down from the sky and the police is surprised. The violent Macchhipith mob comes on to the street. Before the people and police understand what is happening the notorious elements of this area, namely Nooru Mistry, Ayub Clubwala and Ysuf Kadia start private firing. One the one hand was the 'covering' stone throwing from the rooftops and on the other was the mob was on the road. The police was outnumbered. There was panic. The violent mob was ready to attack the people on the road. 8-10 people could have died but the police came right on time and fired.

**Analysis :** The entire city was terrorised,

not suffused with the spirit of devotion. The Ram dhun programme was part of an aggressive call given by the VHP, it was not a show of intense devotion. Such shobha yatras have caused terror and fear throughout the city. Going by Sandesh reporting, it seems as though a city immersed in Ram was attacked. The events that unfolded in Macchhipith actually followed a very different sequence. Our separate report clarifies this in greater detail.

**Page 16**

1. WAS THE MACCHIPITH MOB ATTACK PRE-PLANNED?

**Analysis :** To our knowledge no mob attack takes place without planning. *Sandesh* has chosen to pick on this one because it concerns a minority dominated area of the city.

2. PRIVATE FIRING OF MUSLIMS FROM BOTH MASJIDS IN SADAR BAZAR, FATEHGANJ. The report says that two groups clashed and after a pitched battle there was private firing.

**Analysis :** The headline is misleading. In Fatehganj Muslim families were attacked and their shops burnt.

**17th March 2002**

**Page 2**

1. RESIDENTS OF RANAWAS, DABHOI ANGRY. ' THE ADMINISTRATION IS RUNNING AROUND FOR MUSLIMS, BUT NOBODY HAS COME TO WIPE OUR TEARS'.

**Analysis:** The truth of the matter is that the administration has hardly done anything for the Muslims. We have enough facts to prove that reality is quite contrary to this claim. By highlighting such grouses and by not balancing it with stories from relief camps or Muslim bastis, *Sandesh* reveals its inherent communal biases.

**Page 10**

1. RAMMANDIR WILL BE BUILT EVEN IF WE HAVE TO USE FORCE: PARAMAHANS.

**Analysis:** All RSS and VHP statements are given pride of place in *Sandesh*. Appeals for peace, instance of Hindus and Muslims protecting each other are given short shrift.

**Page 12**

1. THE MUSLIMS OF HATHIKHANA, MITHAFALIA ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE HANUMAN MANDIR. The report says

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that Muslim gave a call to 'cut the Hindus, break the mandir and make a dargah...'

**Analysis:** The report fails to substantiate their claims. There is reason to doubt the veracity of the information contained in the report.

**Page 12**

1. Even after Godhra, Dabhoi had remained peaceful. This was disrupted by Muslims fanatics. Residents of Ranawas demand immediate arrest of anti-national elements.

**Analysis :** Muslims consistently being portrayed as anti-national. They cannot be mere anti-social elements as stated by the Godhra District Collector Jayanti Ravi.

**18th March 2002.**

**Page 1**

1. VIOLENT CONVULSIONS IN VADODARA AGAIN. 3 DEAD. Banner headlines in large, red letters.
2. Top right : close-ups of corpses.

**Analysis :** Both newsreport and photographs designed to sensationalise gruesome incidents of violence.

**Page 3**

1. FANATIC MOB OF MUSLIMS FROM BAWAMANPURA TRIED TO BURN HARISH PETROL PUMP.

**Analysis :** Muslims being portrayed as fanatics once again.

**Page 5**

1. TANDALJA TENSE AFTER RUMOURS SPREAD. The report says that the rumours spread in the area and there was panic. Once people realised it became quite peaceful. Representatives of Shanti Abhiyan say that it is untrue that there was private firing or that police had burst teargas shells. Nothing has happened in Tandalja, but some people are interested in fomenting trouble.

**Page 7**

1. Photographs of those injured and dead.

**Page 11**

1. Newsplus, a regular column. Inset box: There are Muslim dominated areas in various parts of the country. Here, during communal riots Hindus have to bear the consequences. In Gujarat, Godhra stands out during communal riots, but there are echoes of Godhra in other 'pockets' too. Those who stand to gain in one place must remember that they will lose out in ten other

areas. That is inevitable. Now there is a general understanding that those who live in water will stand to lose if they are hostile to crocodiles.

**Analysis:** This is the 'broader perspective' that Sandesh offers its readers. Offensive, anti-minority posturing is routine in the analytical articles. This article serves almost as a mouthpiece of the RSS when it issues a warning to the minority community to behave or face the consequences.

**19th March 2002**

**Page 12**

1. SAI MANDIR AND THE HINDU AREA IN TULSI WADI UNDER VIOLENT ATTACK BY MUSLIMS. Mobs of 5000-7000 attacked the area according to report.

**Analysis:** Gross exaggeration of the numbers, deliberately done.

**20th March 2002**

**Page 3**

1. 70 HINDUS WERE BURNT ALIVE IN GODHRA AND THE RIOTS IN SHEHAR LEFT 44 DEAD. 16 BODIES HAVE YET TO BE IDENTIFIED. The report is basically about an appeal by the administration for help in identifying relatives or kin of the 16 dead. This crucial detail is mentioned only in the last paragraph.

**Analysis:** The deliberate formulation of sensationalised headlines are meant to terrorise or communalise an already divided society. Even an appeal by the administration becomes an excuse to indulge in terror-mongering.

2. SHANTI SAMITI TRIES TO MAINTAIN PEACE. The newsitem is tucked away in small corner of the page.

**Analysis:** Sandesh obviously has its priorities all set out very clearly. News like this can encourage other such attempts to maintain peace but that does not seem to be on the Sandesh agenda.

**Page 14**

1. Photographs of weapons and broken temples.

**21st March 2002**

**Page 7**

1. SUDANESE YOUTH CAUGHT IN FATEHGANJ. DOES HE HAVE AN ISI CONNECTION? The report says that residents have complained of private firing by him. His ISI connection is being explored

says the report. The police found an iron pipe in combing operations in his house.

**Analysis:** The fact of the matter is that the Sudanese national is a student in the M.S. University. He lives in a room above the masjid in Fatehganj. He was reading the namaz when violence began there. He was arrested and it was only when the Embassy intervened that he was released. Why has Sandesh not reported this and instead made claims about his ISI connection?

**Page 16**

1. Photographs: Dead bodies in Bharuch, all close ups.

**23rd March 2002**

**Page 1**

1. Close ups of dead/injured.
2. THE NAKED DANCE OF VIOLENCE IN VADODARA. Headlines in large red letters.

**Page 2**

- 1.3 DIE NEAR FATEHPURA LAL AKHADA. ARE THE TWO MUSLIM POLICEMEN POSTED AT THE POLICE POINT RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS?

**Conclusion**

When Muslims were at fault names were taken, perpetrators were clearly identified. When Muslims were the victims of murderers, arsonists, looters, etc. then it has not been clearly stated

who attacked whom. No sources have been quoted for headlines, even when they have simply been lifted from speeches by VHP leaders. Headlines are also misleading, and often followed up by reports that do not substantiate headlines. Photographs are meant to incite communal anger, fear and terror amongst people. The anti-minority stand is obvious in the slant in news reporting. Editorials and newsitems often written in a way that implicitly and explicitly justifies carnage after the Godhra incident.

**A BRIEF NOTE ON ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN BARODA**

**A. Local TV Channels**

On March 14 a group of PUCL representatives told the Police Commissioner that TV Channels need to be warned. We tried to obtain copies of the offensive tapes before the NHRC visit, were not given those. The Police Commissioner gave a notice to the local channels, they were also off the air for two days but then were back again and going about their work with a vengeance. In the last week of March, owners of two TV channels were arrested, VNM and News Plus, when in fact the other two channels, J TV and Deep were far more inflammatory.

Given below are some samples of the inflammatory stance of the channels.

DATE	NAME OF CHANNEL	CONTENT
Feb. 27, 2002	VNM Channel	Ajay Dave's (VHP ) statement that we will retaliate with violence and create history (in relation to Godhra incident)
From Feb. 27 for more than a week	J TV	Kept repeating images of the Godhra incident many times a day, thereby attempting to create feelings of outrage among Hindus.
March 15, 2002	Siti Cable	Common man on the street said how Hindus want Ram Mandir. We are beginning an <i>andolan</i> today which we will stop after we achieve our goals
March 15, 2002	Deep Channel	Showed rally after <i>shila daan</i> . 3 local leaders Deepak Kharchikar (Shiv Sena), Niraj Jain (Bajrang Dal), Ajay Dave (VHP) gave speeches and interviews at the Machhipeeth <i>naka</i> . These contained anti-Muslim sentiments. 'Muslims will have to live the way we want otherwise we will pull them out of their houses and kill them'.
March 16, 2002	VNM or News Plus In Cable	Ajay Joshi 'we will be training Hindu youth to be <i>ladayak</i> (warriors, aggressive ???)'
March 29, 2002	VNM or News Cable	Mayor said 'like Hirankashap destroyed evil, we will also destroy <i>deshdrohis</i> '.

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**B. SAMPLES OF FAN MAIL AT  
WWW.NARENDRAMODI.ORG.**

*The CM of Gujarat is proud of being email and internet savvy and he has often let it be known that he has a website. Given below are some samples from his website aimed at cynical self-promotion. If there is any need for “proof” of his anti-Muslim, and therefore unconstitutional attitudes they are here at this site. Legal action against Modi as well as the site hosts seems to be in order.*

1. Dear modi ji, you are like a god to us. Thank you for saving Hindus. But you are not doing enough. We will not be satisfied until you send your sena out to Muslim countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan to rape Muslim women, kill and burn Muslims. Thank you Rakesh Kumar Trivedi [raktri74@hotmail.com](mailto:raktri74@hotmail.com)

2. SIR, I FAIL TO FIND WORDS TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE TO YOU FOR THE WAY HINDUS HAVE BEEN PROTECTED IN THIS STATE DESPITE ALL THE CRITICISMS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. YOU HAVE ENDEARED YOURSELF TO ALL THE GUJARATIS. THE WHOLE STATE IS SOLIDLY BEHIND YOU. HATS OFF TO “ASLI MARD”!!!

*p.j.desai ricky071@rediffmail.com*

3. “Lots of thanks for all that u have done to us. We (Hindus) were a victim of Islamic violence since long.”

Dearest Modi sir, Lots of thanks for all that u have done to us. We (Hindus) were a victim of Islamic violence since long. I remember killing of Hindu pilgrims in Vaishno Devi, Amaranth and in almost all over India innocent Hindus were killed by Muslims only on the name of religion and jihad. The entire underworld is run by Muslims. It is very sad that in spite of all these years of Muslim terrorism, some of our leaders still support the

Muslims only to get their votes (Congress for e.g.). The opposition should realize that its duty is not just to oppose every decision of the govt. but to also support the Govt. in the interest of the nation. In such a situation you have taken all the courage to stand against the Muslims and give justice to the majority, you really deserve to be thanked. Come to our city and u’ll realize that people are virtually worshipping you. I understand that the stand you are taking is a difficult one, and I also know that there will be even some Hindus too who will dislike your stand, but a vast majority is with you and love you. Please continue and don’t bother about those critics, we will make sure that you remain the CM forever. Thanks a lot once again. I wish there were few more Narendra Modis in this country... —Rupal

*Yours Truly*

*Rupal (rupal\_333@yahoo.com)*

4. The very fact that anti-national elements were effectively paid back during his tenure is reason enough for us to salute him” - Vishal Patel (A student in Ahmedabad)

5. Respected Modiji, We are proud of you for maintaining Gujarat so well. Please don’t get shaken by the critics, we Hindus all over the world love you so much and we will pray for you always. Thanks and take care” - Shreenivas Gadi

6. “It’s ploy to tarnish CM’s image through 2nd phase of riots sponsorship?” -

7. Sir, We are really pleased by your excellent handling of the riot situation in Gujarat. The English press supported by power-hungry congressmen are out to tarnish your image & that of the powerful Hindu samaj. These people are very few in numbers & the majority of us openly support you & your dynamic handling of the situation. raja khara

4-April-02

SUMMARY OF PAMPHLETS BEING CIRCULATED

Obituary/Announcement of 'Besna' of one of the Godhra victims	This obituary seeks to make a martyr of one of the victims of the Godhra tragedy, reminding everyone of his sacrifice.
Boycott of Muslims	Signed in the name of a "true Hindu patriot" this one urges all Hindus to boycott the entire Muslim population in all possible ways – some of the suggestions include not hiring them, or working for them in their establishments, not buying from, or selling to them; not watching films in which Muslim actors/actresses have worked. If they fail to do so they are threatened in the name of Hanuman and Ram.
On the absurdity of the economic boycott	A 2-page note pointing out that economic sleight of hand or criminal misconduct is not confined to any particular community.
Rise! Awaken!	Slogans of "Hindustan Zindabad" go along with slogans of "Jai Shri Ram". It aims at coaxing Hindus to stop bearing "Muslim atrocities" that they have been inflicting on Hindus since long. Its time to rise up against them. This one is signed in the name of Paramhans.
An R.S.S. highly confidential letter.	This is the most vicious of them all: it lists 34 ways in which they aim to harm/kill/isolate all the minorities – some of these methods include, injecting their newborns with slow poisons by enlisting Hindu doctors, accumulating arms, boycott all secular programmes, encourage the use of alcohol and drugs in areas dominated by the minorities. It also says that such activities should be reported to the office in Nagpur, where they can also obtain further information if they require it.
"Hindus and Sikhs Beware!" dated 13 April 2001	An appeal to Muslim youth to volunteer to "entice" heathen girls ('kafirs')
Historical decision regarding "Quran"	An order passed by a Metropolitan judge – A booklet including a judgement in a Delhi court, misquoting Vivekanand, Quran, Shri Aurobindo and M.K. Gandhi in the wrong context to suit their objectives. In order to avoid the rectified stand of these great people they have not indicated the timings of their statement. This is being misused as propaganda against the minority.
"Jehad"	An utterly profane piece critical of Muslims and valorising Narendra Modi for his "great deeds."
Shaheed Hone wale Marhum Musalmanon ki Aaho Pukaar	A self critical piece attributing the present sorry state of Muslims to not living by true Islamic edicts. Which includes Muslim have not sharing their bit with have nots by not paying the correct Zakaat, not keeping fast as prescribed, not having a roving eye on women, etc.
Na Sambhaloge to mit jaoge ....	A piece of advice – "God helps only those who help themselves" — to Muslims of various denominations to unite, to boycott the poison-spreading Sandesh newspaper, and asking Muslims to take up self-defence and not bank on the Government and the Police.
A letter written by Vimala Thakar of Mt. Abu dated March 2, 2002	A "friendly" communication that does not communicate. It touches on various issues, "the preplanned conspiracy of the Godhra carnage ... the so called 'secularists', the misguided Muslim youth, and perhaps the terrorists exported by our neighbour Pakistan who could have decided to terrorise the Hindu devotees in such a way that they would not dare to go to Ayodhya and cooperate with the Project of the VHP of building the temple." It ends by appealing to support the Prime Minister of India's appeal for restraint.

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# COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN GUJARAT- ROLE OF THE MEDIA

*(Adjudications rendered on 30.6.2003 in 24 cases)*

## PREFACE

“There are many religions as there are individuals; but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another’s religion. If Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in a dreamland. The Hindus, the Mohammedans, the Parsis and the Christians who have made their country are fellow countrymen and they will have to live in unity if only for their own interest. In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms; nor has it ever been so in India.”

—Mahatma Gandhi

We have forgotten this advise. Rather completely. There can be no explanation for the insane carnage in Gujarat, which burned, experienced barbarous violence and left in its aftermath all round fear, hatred, insecurity and grim vengeful attitude among the people. The agonizing thoughts and introspection forced on the society by the carnage cannot be eluded. A pertinent question here is whether the media played their role fairly on the expected lines adhering to the norms. There are 32 large and vernacular publications in Ahmedabad alone prominent among them being “Sandesh” and “Gujarat Samachar”. Therefore this applies more so to the local journalists who have to play a careful and responsible role in such situations of crisis.

All disorders, which acquire communal character, make news. It is axiomatic that they cause divisiveness and hatred among the common people. It is needless to say reporting of such an event is as sensitive, delicate and challenging as the event itself. The information is disseminated should no doubt factually be correct but at the same time should not be inciting and on the other hand, should be palliative. Voices of concern could be heard from varied quarters that the “Media” did not play its legitimate role during this period and at least few papers by their unholy dissemination of news polluted the atmosphere. It

is true that localized incidents communal violence are not uncommon in the post-independent India. However, when reported in the media, they assume and induce repercussion of national, and sometimes international, character.

During the riots in Gujarat in February-May 2002, some NGOs, and Committees consisting renowned senior citizens visited Gujarat and gave their assessment about the role of media. Likewise, Editors Guild Fact Findings Mission consisting of few senior editors visited Gujarat, interviewed people gave a report with particular reference to the role played by media and found that some papers had indulged in giving slanted reports.

Twice during the crisis the Chairman of the Press Council appealed to the media for restraint and care. The first came on 4.3.2002 immediately after the riots broke out and is produced below.

“When the nation is fully and seriously engaged in fighting terrorism, it is unfortunate that the present crisis in Gujarat, which may lead to communal unrest through out the country has occurred.

The media, which enjoys the utmost freedom of expression, has a great and vital role to play in moulding public opinion on correct lines in regard to the need of friendly and harmonious relations between various communities and religious groups and thus promote national solidarity.

The press should strictly adhere to proper norms and standards in reporting or commenting on matters, which bear on communal relations. One such important norm is not to distort, or exaggerate not to employ intemperate, inciting and unrestrained language. The local papers particularly should strictly adhere to this norm.

The role of media in such situations is to be peacemakers and not abettors, to be troubleshooters and not troublemakers. Let the media play their noble role of promoting peace and harmony among the people in the present crisis in Gujarat. Any trend to disrupt the same either directly or indirectly would be an anti-national act.

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The noble traditions of our media have always been to build up national solidarity. I appeal to them to rededicate themselves to play this noble role.

In situations like these in no time "A Suodhan becomes a Duryodhan". Our concept is not to allow that."

Again on 3.4.2002 having noted with concern the somewhat sensationalized coverage of the riots, referring to the appeal of 4.3.2002, the Chairman, Press Council of India issued the following appeal-

It was fervently hoped that the media would heed the appeal made to it in the interest of the nation as a whole. But it has been noted with deep anguish that a large number of newspapers and news channels in the country and, in particular a large section of the print and electronic media in Gujarat has, instead of alleviating communal unrest, played an ignoble role in inciting communal passions leading to large scale rioting, arson and pillage in the State concerned.

It is once again emphasized that the media should strictly adhere to proper norms and standards in reporting or commenting on matters, which bear on communal relations. One such important norm is not to distort, or exaggerate, not to employ intemperate, inciting and unrestrained language. The local papers particularly should strictly adhere to this norm.

The role of media in such situation is to be peacemakers and not abettors, to be troubleshooters and not troublemakers. Let the media play their noble role of promoting peace and harmony among the people in the present crisis in Gujarat. Any trend to disrupt the same either directly or indirectly would be an anti-national act.

It is also brought to the notice of the media that any news report printed or published by the print media or relayed by the electronic media in contravention of ethical norms in reporting or commenting on matters pertaining to communal harmony is likely to invite penal action under the provisions of Section 295-A of the Indian Penal Code and allied provisions. Please take note and be advised accordingly.

On 22nd July 2002 the Gujarat Daily Newspapers Association organized a conference at Ahmedabad on a request by the Chairman to

discuss the role played by media in reporting incidents during the carnage. The Governor was the Chief Guest. The Chairman, Press Council of India addressed the conference apprising them about the norms to be accepted and followed and impressing upon them that the media's role should be to quench the flames rather than add explosives to the devastating situation.

The Press Council by the norms set out, ordained the media to avoid sensational, provocative and alarming headlines, avoid details that might hurt religious sentiments; as also the reports that could undermine the peoples confidence in the maintenance and restoration of peace and law and order.

The Press Council gathered as many as 800 paper cuttings and carefully examined the same. Wherever there were violations of the norms; the Council proceeded to take suo-motu action against such papers. In addition it received individual complaints. After processing, the Inquiring Committee held its sitting at Ahmedabad and after hearing the parties in the matters made its recommendations. Since issues are common to these cases they are grouped together below for comprehensive understanding of the situation and views of the Press Council thereon.

#### **ADJUDICATIONS S.NO. I-XXIV**

I-II. Complaints of Dr. Shujaat Vali, Lara Mother Health Care Centre, Godhra, Gujarat against Gujarat Samachar and Sandesh.(14/47-48/02-03)

III. Complaint of Shri Usman Haji Ahmed Qurayshi, General Secretary, Forum for Social Justice, Ahmedabad against Sandesh (14/118/02-03)

IV-V. Complaints of Shri Shahabuddin, President, All India Muslim Majliees-e-Mushwarat, New Delhi against Gujarat Samachar and Sandesh. (14/157/ 02-03) and (14/ 229/ 02-03)

VI-VII. Complaints of Dr. Shakeel Ahmad, Administrator, IRCG-Cell for Legal Help and Guidance, Ahmedabad against Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar. (14/305-306/02-03.)

VIII. Memorandum from Citizens of Ahmedabad regarding spreading of violence through print media in Gujarat against Sandesh. (14/307/02-03)

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IX. Objectionable clippings relating to Gujarat riots for suo-motu action against Vishva Hindu Samachar, Hindustan Times, Dainik Jagran, The Telegraph, Asian Age, Rashtriya Sahara and The Mainstream. (14/386/ 02- 03)

X. Reference from an anonymous complainant regarding publication of an objectionable photograph in the Hindustan Times, New Delhi. (14/20/02-03)

XI-XII Complaints of Shri Hindumal M. Shah, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh against Deccan Chronicle, Hyderabad. (4/84-85/02-03) and (14/142/02-03)

XIV. Complaint of Maj. General Don Patrick (Retired) Ooty, Tamil Nadu against Hindu. (14/105/02-03)

XV. Complaint of Dr. K.P. Hardas, Nagpur. against Indian Express, Maharashtra.(14/ 116/ 02-03)

XVI. Complaint of the President, Jeevit Hindustan, Kolkata (through Ministry of I&B) against The Telegraph. (14/308/02-03)

XVII. Complaint of Dr. Krishen Kak, IAS (Retired) Delhi against The Times of India, Delhi(14/106/02-03)

XVIII-XXI. Complaints of Shri Sharad C. Misra, Mumbai, Dr. D. N. Godhok, Mumbai, Shri Hardayal Bhalla, Mumbai and Shri D. C. Gupta, Mumbai against The Times of India. (14/122-125/02-03)

XXII-XIV. Complaints of Shri V.D. Mishra, Commissioner of Police, Aurangabad Maharashtra against Tarun Bharat, Saamna and Vishwamitra.

### **SERIAL NOS.1-8**

Complaints against Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar.

Year 2002 was a year of trials and tribulations for the country. Parts of Gujarat faced early in the year, a burst of frenzy that prompted many to question the principles of secularism enshrined in our Constitution. The situation also brought to the fore, the role of Media in the crisis situation.

The Press Council of India received stores of complaints against the print media, some national level publication, which the Press Council has dealt with separately and some Gujarat based newspapers. The subject matter of complaints adjudicated herein is the reporting by two Gujarati

newspapers Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar, leading dailies of Gujarat, which the complainants listed herein below, alleged, played a role not consistent with the guidelines relating to coverage of communal disturbances. The complaints against Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar have been summarized below:

I-II.

Dr. Situjaat Vali,  
Lara Mother Health  
Care Centre,  
Godhira (Gujarat)

Versus

1. Sandesh,
2. Gujarat Samachar

Dr. Shujaat Vali, Lara Mother Health Care Centre, Godhra, Gujarat filed a complaint on 26.2.2002 charging the press with publication of misleading and inflammatory reports during March to April 2002 and playing a criminal role in spreading riots in Gujarat after Godhra violence. The complainant submitted that Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar had published objectionable, misleading news items and rumours, adding fuel to the fire. Dr. Vali requested the Press Council to take necessary action to restrain the Press from spreading communal violence.

Comments of the Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar were invited on 10.7.2002.

### Comments of Sandesh

Managing Editor, Sandesh in his comments dated 3.8.2002 while denying the allegations made in the complaint, submitted that the complaint was false, improper, illegal and lodged with a biased mind. The respondent submitted that the "Sandesh" never committed any breach of journalistic ethic nor intended to commit breach of journalistic ethics at any point of time. It denied publishing any misleading, objectionable, exaggerated, inflammatory and biased news items/pictures relating to the Gujarat violence during the period from March to April 2002 as alleged in the complaint. According to the respondent the reports were carried in good faith. Further the news, which were published in "Sandesh" daily during the relevant period for promoting/maintaining harmony amongst the communities, had not been cited in the said letter of complainant, which showed that the

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complainant had cited certain news items with biased mind. Generally all Gujarati print media as well as journals published in English language had also highlighted the alleged incidents in their newspaper and magazines/journals. The news item had been published in the large interest of the members of the society and to make them conscious for their lives and therefore it could not be said that the published news items in question were misleading, objectionable, exaggerated, inflammatory, and biased news item/pictures relating to the Gujarat violence. These were not provoking, instigating or the tendency to whip up the communal tension. The respondent submitted that the alleged news were published in good faith without any bias and in the interest of members of the society at large and not to add any fuel to the fire of riots in the state of Gujarat. The respondent further stated that "Sandesh" has also published a numbers of news, which helped to cool down the situation, and published appeals of political leaders to maintain communal harmony in the society.

Gujarat Samachar did not file comments.

A copy of the comments of Sandesh was forwarded to the complainant on 10.9.2002.

III.

Shri Usman Haji Ahmed Qurayshi,  
General Secretary,  
Forum for Social Justice  
Ahmedabad.

Versus

The Sandesh

Shri Usman Haji Ahmed Qurayshi, General Secretary, Forum for Social Justice, Ahmedabad in his complaint dated 20.4.2002 against Sandesh, Gujarati daily, Ahmedabad alleged publication of false and immoral news items thereby adding fuel to the fire during the Gujarat riots. The complainant submitted that the respondent had published a news item captioned "Dead bodies of two young women found in very distorted condition" (English translation) in the issue dated 1.3.2002. The news item reported about two girls allegedly abducted from the Sabaramati Express and found dead later on. It further reported that the worst aspect about it was that their dead bodies were found with their breast cut and removed from the body and that the horrible sight had created a feeling of vengeance amongst

the Hindu community.

The complainant submitted that the impugned news was totally false and did not have any basis. In fact the Government including the Defence Minister had clearly mentioned that no such incident had occurred. He averred that such news was not reported by any other newspapers and alleged that the news item was published with an ulterior motive to create hatred in the minds of the people of the majority community. It had enraged their communal feelings and led to retaliation. The incidents occurring in Godhra thereafter were proof to the ill effect of the said news.

The second news item published on 6.3.2002 reported that as per the intelligence report, the lives of Hindus would be in danger after the Haj pilgrims return. The news item further goes to say that on orders of ISI, the terrorists were ready to attack Hindus at various places after the Haj pilgrims return. Huge amount of RDX and other explosives were ready as per a well-planned programme to sabotage Hindu places. But these agencies were waiting for the Hai pilgrims to return to begin their attacks.

Shri Qurayshi alleged that the impugned news item enraged the Hindus in Gujarat and also created a sense of insecurity amongst them. The Sandesh had thus sabotaged the peace in the State and these news items were only intended to add fuel to whole fire of the riots and creating vengeance in the minds of the people of both the communities. The complainant requested the Council to take immediate action against the Sandesh.

#### Written Statement

A show cause notice was issued to the respondent Sandesh, Ahmedabad on 18.6.2002. Managing Editor, Sandesh in his written statement dated 5.7.2002 submitted that the news-item was published in good faith and with an intention to caution and alert the public at large to take precautionary steps and also to protect members of the society after taking necessary note of the news. According to him, the said news-item was published in other newspapers also. He denied that the news-items were meant to create any further disturbances or to add fuel to fire. A copy of the written statement was forwarded to the complainant on 23.7.2002.

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### Counter Comments

The complainant- Shri Qurayshi in his counter comments dated 20.9.2002 submitted that the incident that happened at Godhra on 27.2.2002 was condemnable. The complainant alleged that many a times the print media sponsored violence had broken out. At different times some big daily Gujarati newspapers sowed the seeds of communal and racial violence and nurtured them. According to the complainant, the "Sandesh" was anti minority and trying to project Muslim community as fanatic, frenzied, anti-social and anti-national. The news items published by the respondent newspaper were, he alleged, distorted, exaggerated, provocative and suppressed the truth.

A copy of the counter comments was forwarded to the Sandesh respondent on 22.10.2002.

### Additional Written Statement:

Managing Editor, Sandesh in his additional written statement dated 23.10.2002 submitted that the complaint was a one-sided version of presentation of the events starting from the 27th February 2002. The newspaper had not the slightest intention of prejudicing one community against the other nor had it ever indulged in the same. The newspaper reported the actual events as has been reported by other newspapers and the electronic media of the country. The newspapers had no intention to create any ill feeling for any community and it had not done anything, which affected the peace and tranquility and harmony in the society. The complainant, he claimed, had not stated the correct facts but presented distorted version.

IV- V.

Shri Syed Shahabuddin,  
President, All India Muslim  
Majlis-E-Mushawarat,  
New Delhi.

### Versus

1. Gujarat Samachar
2. Sandesh

Shri Syed Shahabuddin, President, All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, New Delhi in his letter dated 22.04.2002 drew the attention of the Press Council towards reports published by the Gujarati press in general and "Gujarati

Samachar" and "Sandesh" in particular for inflaming religious passions in Gujarat. Shri Shahabuddin Syed also produced a copy of an article by an eminent journalist Shri Batuk Vora on the subject published in the Mainstream. Some of the contents of the article, which are as follows, give an overview :

"If a question is raised to any literate member of the minority community in Ahmedabad as to who played the most communal or criminal role during this carnage, and he or she will invariably shoot the reply :

Two things : The police under Narendra Modi and two leading Gujarati daily newspapers -Gujarat Samachar (GS) and Sandesh (SD).

You ask any Hindu fanatic about these newspapers, and he or she will certainly give them a clean chit."

The writer quoted the opinions, of different persons about these two particular newspapers, Gujarat Samachar and Sandesh.

Shri Shahabuddin requested the Council to take suo-motu notice of the news and views published by the two major dailies of Gujarat for the period from 27th Feb to 26th April 2002 to review their performance in the light of the code of conduct laid down by the Council.

The complainant in his letter-dated 20.6.2002 again requested the Council to take cognizance of the violation of the code of conduct prescribed by the Council by sonic newspapers in Gujarat. The complainant also referred to the report of the Editors' Guild of India, which indicted the Gujarati press, particularly the Sandesh and the Gujarat Samachar. The complainant further submitted that the National Human Rights Commissions had also noted the phenomenon and during the visit of AIMMM delegation many Complaints from the victims were heard and the Gujarati press was held responsible for igniting and fanning communal violence.

Comments of respondent "Gujarat Samachar" and "Sandesh" were invited on 26.06.2002.

### Comments of Sandesh

Managing editor, Sandesh in his comments dated 03.08.2002 submitted that the contents, averments allegations made against "Sandesh" by the complainant were false, improper, illegal

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and had been made with a biased mind. The respondent submitted that while the news items published in Sandesh on various dates as alleged in the article of Mr. Batuk Vora, were all published in "Sandesh" daily during the alleged period, those exhorting the public to maintain the harmony amongst the communities, had not been cited in the article which shows that the author of the article, Shri Vora had cited certain news items with biased mind. The respondent further submitted that not only Sandesh but generally all Gujarati Print Media as well as magazines, journals etc. printed and published in English language, also highlighted the alleged incidents in their newspapers and journals. The alleged news items were published in the larger interest of the members of the society and to make them conscious for their lives and therefore it cannot be said that the "Sandesh" had committed any breach of journalistic ethics.

According to the respondent, the contents of the article in question did not have any evidential support nor was it legally tenable. The article written by Mr. Batuk Vora of "Mainstream" published in its issue of April 20, 2002 was a "Personal View" of the author in regard of the alleged subject matter i.e. "Gujarati Print Media's role in the carnage" and after carefully going through the article, it could be inferred that author might have some grievances against the Gujarati Print Media.

The author of article failed in appreciating the news items published in "Sandesh" for establishing peace in the society and appeals of political leaders to maintain communal harmony amongst the members of society, contended the respondent.

The respondent further submitted that in the alleged article the author tried to defend the electronic media by saying that they are newly established and were not able to understand the root cause or the psychology of both the communities and conflict in Gujarat. In this context the respondent raised a question whether live telecast of violence shown by the electronic media, could be called ethical while the print media, which published same news of violence a day later, were unethical?

The respondent editor, Sandesh in his additional comments dated 08.11.2002 submitted that the insinuations and allegations made by the

writer of the article, enclosed with the complaint were made with ill will. According to the respondent, all the newspapers in the State had reported what actually happened in Gujarat and other parts of the country. Sandesh had not deviated from its line of unbiased reporting of news. It did not take side with any community and always attempted to place on record the real picture.

The respondent stated that a Commission headed by a retired Supreme Court Judge, Hon'ble Mr. Justice G.T. Nanavati, was enquiring into the details of these disturbances. The crimes committed on both the communities by anti-social elements and anti-national elements were being cited even before the Commission. Therefore, it is not as if something was imagined by the newspapers or some imaginary events were cooked up by the newspapers for the purpose of getting some cheap publicity. The respondent submitted that the complaint was devoid of any substance and liable to be dismissed.

No comments were filed by respondent Gujarat Samachar.

VI-VII.

Dr. Shakeel Ahmad,  
Administiator,  
IRCG Cell for Legal Help &  
Guidance, Ahmedabad

Versus

1. Sandesh
2. Gujarat Samachar

Dr. Shakeel Ahmad, Administrator, Islamic Relief Committee Gujarat (IRCG)-Cell for Legal Help & Guidance, Ahmedabad filed a complaint dated 22nd July, 2002 against Gujarati dailies - "Sandesh" and "Gujarat Samachar" for publishing distorted, concocted, fabricated and exaggerated news items during the Gujarat riots after Godhra incident. The complainant alleged that the vernacular press, particularly the daily newspapers- Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar, had seriously and grossly inflamed the situation during the riots in the State in violation of the established norms of journalistic ethics. The reporting and publication of the news items by both these newspapers had also been since long directly vindictive, incriminating the Muslim community for creating trouble in the society, being prone to create disputes and pick up fights with the Hindu

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community. According to the complainant if a detailed analysis of their daily reporting is undertaken, one conclusion could be drawn that the reporting had been unfair and partisan and they have completely blown out of proportion the incidence of the so called attack on the majority Hindu community and their sufferings, in turn instigating retaliatory action against the Muslim community.

The complainant alleged that the said conduct of the newspapers clearly established that they had not discharged their obligatory duties of free, fair and unbiased reporting of giving true picture to the society thereby facilitating and advocating the maintenance of peace and harmony of the society. On the contrary the said reporting contained rumours and alarming news with an intention to incite Hindus and cause fear or alarm to the Muslim community.

Giving references of some news items; the complainant submitted that the respondent newspapers splashed coloured photograph of the acts of slaughtering of animals with a view to incite feeling of disgust and hatred amongst the Hindu community alleging cow slaughter in broad daylight and public places. It also reported that the members of Vishwa Hindu Parishad had been trying to stop the same but were attacked by the Muslim community running for their lives. The complainant referred particularly to the news item published in Sandesh dated 28.02.2002.

The complainant submitted that when the said newspapers were expected to show restraint and report and publish the Godhra incident giving a true and clear picture to the public, they published malafide, distorted, concocted and fabricated stories and the incidence. Show-cause notices were issued to "Sandesh" and "Gujarat Samachar" on 09.08.2002.

#### Written statement of Sandesh

Managing editor of Sandesh in his written statement dated 18.09.2002 denied the allegations made in the complaint. The respondent submitted that the newspaper had not the slightest intention of prejudicing one community against the other nor has it even indulged into the same. According to the respondent all the newspaper in the State of Gujarat and Mumbai, published in English or Gujarati had similarly reported what had actually happened in Gujarat and other parts of the

country and Sandesh has not deviated from its line of activity of unbiased reporting of news. The respondent stated that the newspaper had never portrayed or justified any act of violence either by the Muslim or by Hindu community. It had reported the actual events as had been reported by other newspapers and the electronic media of the country. The respondent submitted that the complaint was devoid of substance and therefore, the same may be dismissed.

A copy of the written statement was forwarded to the complainant on 22.11.2002.

#### Written statement of Gujarat Samachar

The managing editor, Gujarat Samachar in his written statement dated 16.10.2002 while denying the allegations made in the complaint submitted that they acted in complete bonafide manner following the norms of freedom of the press. They had complied with their duty to reach out to the masses and put forth the true and correct state of affairs in the State and the country. During the period of the unfortunate riots in Gujarat their newspaper Gujarat Samachar had observed severe restraint in publishing the news items, which could add fuel to the riots and spark off further riots.

A copy of the written statement was forwarded to the complainant on 21.11.2002.

VIII. Memorandum from Citizens of Ahmedabad regarding spreading of violence through Print media in Gujarat.

The citizens of Ahmedabad vide their memorandum dated 22nd July 2002 drew the attention of the Press Council towards the role of media during the riots in Gujarat and thereby spreading violence in the State. It was stated in the memorandum that at different times one or two big daily Gujarati newspapers had sown the seeds of communal and racial violence and nurtured them. Many a times print media sponsored violence had broken out. Among Gujarati dailies, the newspaper "Sandesh" had spread violence by publishing news and articles in provocative and instigating language.

Referring to several instances, the complainants submitted that the Sandesh Daily newspaper was anti-minority and it published totally biased, partial and provocative news items. It projected Muslim community as fanatic, frenzied, anti-social and anti-national and

depicted them as terrorists. It was further alleged in the memorandum that the news items published after the Godhra incident were twisted, distorted, false in facts, exaggerated or presented half truths and instigated and provoked. Captions to photographs and box-item were printed in tricky and deceptive manner.

The details of the 17 news items alleged by concocted or provocative were as follows :

1. 28.02.2002 page 1 continued on page 14- Title stating that: 60 Hindus burnt alive in Godhra. Provocative language used.
2. 28.02.2002 page 1 heading: 10-15 Hindu ladies dragged away by fanatic mob from the railway compartment. Contents-Religious fanatics kidnapped some 10-15 Hindu women from railway coach. (2) Ladies ran away to save their lives and miscreants caught them.
3. 28.02.2002 page 16 bogus story repeated with the heading: 8-10 young ladies dragged away; in slums helpless women were struggling to escape from the grip of Shaitans. Report by an eyewitness: Bapunagar mob dragged away 8-10 ladies into the slums.
4. 28.02.2002 page 5 news item with heading: On arrival of Sabarmati Express at Ahmedabad slogans shouted Jai Shree Ram. Blood against blood.
5. Suppression of truth 23.02.2002 page 3: Mob killed a youth in Bapunagar, buses and shops set on fire in Ahmedabad. Actually youth killed was a Muslim but this paper printed that a youth owning Khanna mutton shop was killed, deliberately his identity was not disclosed. Other victims were Muslims and their properties but "Sandesh" has not mentioned anywhere in the news.
6. 28.02.2002 page 2 heading: On the edge of sword train driver was hijacked. In fact there is no such hijack of Sabarmati Express train driver any other newspaper either in Gujarati or English published such a story.
7. 01.03.2002 Page 1 continued on page 14 heading: 15000 mobs did great destruction: 50 burnt alive in Gulmarg. Society of Chamanpura (Ahmedabad)-Three died, five injured: mob became fierce. News about killing of Ex-MP Shri Ehsan Jafri printed, On the 1st page, the story tells that ex-MP

fired at the mob, so that mob was irritated and killed him.

8. 01.03.2002 page 16 heading: Out of kidnapped young ladies from Sabarmati Express, dead bodies of two ladies recovered-breasts of ladies were cut down. Actually no such incident has happened. Police authority denied this incident. (Gujarati daily newspaper "Gujarat Samachar" dated 02.03.2002 carried news of denial of any incident of breasts cutting.)
9. Deceptive and tricky photo and news 01.03.2002 on the top of front page amid coloured photo of funeral pyres, a big title of 98 killed is printed thereby creating an impression of death of 98 persons of majority community on the mind of readers.
10. 05.03.2002 there is a news item on 1st page with heading : Karsevaks going ahead neglecting prohibitory orders. Disobeying of prohibitory orders by Karsevaks is glorified in this news.
11. 05.03.2002 there is story on page 2 with the title "Anger of people against TV Channels". It reports some TV channels had telecast reports with partiality creating tensions between two communities.
12. 05.03.2002 page 11. A highly communal, objectionable, provocative, inflammatory and anti Muslim article of Manoj Gandhi, some excerpts are as under.

Heading-Gory incidents of Godhra-Ahmedabad-dangerous game of Khoon ka badla khoon

Big heading (1) Conspiracy of fundamentalist Muslim terrorists Gujarat is ablaze (2) Dangerous reactions to instigation of tolerant Hinduism. Subheading in block letters (1) After 50 years of Independence what is the reason of Muslims hatred towards Hindus of Hindustan? (2) After the communal riots of 1992 and Godhra incident. Muslims should learn that the results of instigating tolerant Hindus can be dangerous. (3) If fundamentalist Muslim does not understand this truth, then innocent Muslims will continue to be sacrificed in this gory game.

13. 06.03.2002 page 1-8 columns heading "Danger to Hindus" "Terrible conspiracy of retaliating attack after Haj". Subheading- "Fears of RDX bomb blast or plane hijack."

14. 24.04.2002 page 1 continued on page 9  
Title-"Hindu set ablaze, young lady lost doubtfully (sic)-as sunnat for fanatic mobs-only chappal and packet of Lays found".
15. 26.04.2002 page 5  
Title "Ladies going to Dhalgarwad for shopping despite police advise were stabbed by sticks".
16. 27.04.2002 page 2 Title "Stern string powder which can melt a human being found- white powder sent to laboratory for analysis - police astonished seeing 15 kilo of powder - petrol bomb, country made bomb, kerosene and bottles seized".
17. Bogus story "Sandesh" 27.04.2002 page 1 continued on page 14  
Title-subtitle "Try to kill cows by throwing at them an explosive liquid; police foil an attempt to set the city on fire" translation of bogus story. "Anti-social elements attacked the chali of famous jagannath mandir on the night of Thursday and more than that their intention was to set on fire the entire state. Police went on time handled the situation. A conspiracy to burn alive two cows of Dharwad."

Condemning the incident that happened at Godhra on 27th Feb.2002, the complainants requested for intervention against misuse of the freedom of the print media in Gujarat.

#### Written Statement

A show-cause notice was issued to "Sandesh", Ahmedabad on 08.08.2002.

The respondent, Managing Editor, Sandesh in his written statement dated 12.09.2002 submitted that the complainants had not submitted any details about their address, residence or profession. In view of the same, as per the respondent, there was a doubt whether the complaint was genuine and bonafide. The complaint was in the form of a story rather than in the form of details.

The respondent requested the Council to dismiss the complaint as they claimed it was nothing but an attempt on the part of certain disgruntled and disappointed competitors to tarnish the image of the newspaper's publication in the eyes of the public at large.

According to the respondent, "Sandesh" was maintaining high standard of journalistic ethics and had never indulged in any activity, as

stated in the Memorandum.

#### Further written statement

The respondent-editor, Sandesh, Ahmedabad in his further written statement dated 12.12.2002 submitted that their newspaper Sandesh had reported the details which had been published by all other newspapers in the State and which had been repeatedly aired by the T.V. channels. So the reporting in the newspaper was the outcome of the events, which had taken place for which no newspaper was required to be dealt with under the provisions of Press Council Act. The Respondent requested that show cause notice may be withdrawn.

#### Appearance before the Inquiry Committee

All, the above eight complaints came up for consideration before the Inquiry Committee on 28th and 29th April 2003 at Ahmedabad. Shri A.J.Yagnik, Advocate appeared for the complainants, namely, Dr. Shujaat Vali and Shri Usman Haji Ahmad Qurayshi. S/Shri M.A. Kharadi and M.T.M. Alakim, Advocates appeared for Dr. Shakeel Ahmed. Shri P.K. Jani, Advocate appeared for the respondent newspaper-Sandesh. There was no appearance on behalf of Gujarat Samachar. Shri Batuk Vohra, author of one of the impugned articles was also present amongst the audience.

Shri Syed Shahabuddin, however, in his letter dated 15.4.2003 in response to the notice of hearing informed that he would like the Inquiry Committee of the Council to take suo-motu cognizance or the blatant violation of the code of conduct by the Press.

#### Oral submissions

Shri A.J. Yagnik, Advocate appearing for the first two complainants submitted that the complainants have been dedicated readers of Gujarat Samachar and Sandesh since long and have all regards for these two newspapers. However they took serious objection to the publication of two irresponsible news items in Sandesh issues dated 1.3.2002 and 6.3.2002 alleging rape and chopping off of the breasts of two women found dead and the second report alleging that the intelligence report had indicated possibility of terrorist attack after the returns of the Haj Pilgrims. The counsel further submitted

that while the Sandesh claimed that the impugned report of 1.3.2002 was based on the contents of the letter dated 28.2.2002 written by Shri Shambu Prasad Shukla, Area Secretary, VHP, Panchmahal (Godhra) to Collector, Panchmahal with copies endorsed to District Police Headquarters and Sandesh, the paper itself had made no efforts to verify the facts. Further, there was nothing about the breast cutting in the said letter of Area Secretary of VHP, the translation of which reads as follows : *“Tire impact of massacre in Sabarmati Express at Godhra yesterday on 27.02.2002 has not subsided and till now we are receiving more and more tragic information. Yesterday from the same train some anti-social elements kidnapped two-three Hindus girls. Vishwa Hindu Parishad Office at Kalol and the workers from tire surrounding villages received the news of the Hindu girls kidnapped from the Sabarmati Express at Godhra. These girls were forcibly taken to some wilderness and were mercilessly raped by the hooligans and were then killed and their dead bodies were thrown away in a small pond near Kalol. Some people saw these bodies and so far as our knowledge is goes no post mortem were carried out. As Per the latest information that we received, the hooligans had poured petrol on the dead bodies and set them on fire so that no evidence could be traced. This is a very serious matter, and we request you to take immediate step in this matter”*.

The Counsel reiterated that there was nothing in this letter to justify the report. Moreover, the newspaper “Sandesh” should have verified the facts from the Superintendent of Police of the district, where the so-called incident had allegedly taken place.

Regarding the report charging that more attacks would take place on the return of Haj Pilgrims, he alleged that the report was not only without basis, it had unabashedly attempted to provoke communal feelings and enmity. Though the paper claimed that another paper “Asian Age” had carried similar report, the thrust of that report was different. He also placed reliance on the norms already laid down by the Press Council to justify his objections.

Shri M.A. Kharadi, Advocate for Dr. Sakeel Ahmed drew the attention of the Inquiry Committee towards publication of fabricated and inflammatory news reports in 28.2.2002 issue of Sandesh as follows :

(a) “60 Hindus burnt alive at Godhra”

suggesting that it was pre-planned act.

- (b) From railway coach 10-15 Hindu Young girls dragged and abducted by religious fanatics. In some places it was stated that 4 young girls or 8-10 young girls.
- (c) Hindu leader named Rajendra Shah is quoted to have said that it was a shameful attack on innocent Ramsevaks and hence Hindu should get organized and take revenge and go for “Khooon ka badla khooon” (Avenge blood with blood).
- (d) The lesson to the Jinnah’s followers had become a necessity.

The counsel for Dr. Shakeel Ahmad filed a bunch of clippings pertaining to Sandesh and also filed an affidavit in furtherance to the complaint.

Shri P.K. Jani, Advocate of Sandesh presented the defence in all the cases pertaining to Sandesh took preliminary objection to the non-filing of the complaint by Dr Shakeel Ahmed in conformity with the Inquiry Regulations, and more particularly the clippings on which the complainant was relying.

The Inquiry Committee accepted the documents and produced by the complainant with a note from the counsel for Sandesh to the effect that the cognizance of the same may not be taken by the Inquiry Committee except to the extent that they replicated the annexures already received in the complaint of Shri Usman Haji Ahmad Qurayshi and the other clippings annexed and the reply filed may not be considered or taken note of.

Shri P.K. Jani, Advocate representing Sandesh submitted that a number of organizations had risen against the Godhra carnage on 28th February 2002 and Sandesh was apprehending danger had appealed to the people not to forget the path of non-violence. The counsel further submitted that with the rapid development of means of communication such as TV News channels, Mobile phones and SMS even people in remote areas instantly knew about the happenings in Godhra. Political leaders visited the State of Gujarat and gave objective, subjective and biased speeches. Sandesh had tried to give space to every viewpoint.

Shri P.K. Jani submitted that the Sandesh had maintained due objectivity while reporting the news items dated 1.3.2002 and 6.3.2002. A

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Bandh Call was given on 28.2.2002 at the instance of VHP following the Godhra incident but the State authorities had failed in providing information to the press. The Respondent counsel submitted that out of 123 publications in the State, not even a single newspaper, except the respondent, appealed to the public to maintain peace and calm. The newspapers were flooded with rumours and biased TV coverage. The news item dated 1.3.2002, regarding the treatment meted out to two women, was based on the information collected by their reporter written and verbal and had been published in good faith. They had received no denial of the same.

As regard, news report dated 6.3.2002; the counsel submitted that it was based on three sources. The information given by Superintendent of Police of the IB department to the Media. Asian Age (Gujarat Age) had published the same news two days earlier. Gujarat Samachar also published the news. Thus, while the media at large had carried the report that Hajis were trying to create trouble, Sandesh had, exercised a maximum restraint. However, all the apprehensions of the newspapers came to be true with events that followed including killings, explosion etc. The counsel submitted that Sandesh had balanced the obligation of the press with citizens right to information.

The counsel submitted that Sandesh was a newspaper of long standing with 80 years in the forefront of the media scene in Gujarat and espoused the cause of the public. The counsel stressed in conclusion that the reportage of Sandesh was in public interest carried in good faith and for public good. Sandesh had acted in a responsible manner and it had never attempted to inflame communal passion at any point of time. The counsel prayed that the complaints might be dismissed.

#### Recommendation of the inquiry Committee

Before proceeding to examine the matters on merit, the Committee observed that the unfortunate incidents in Gujarat between February-May 2002 has underscored the importance of the media in imparting to the citizens at large, information and analysis in a balanced and impartial manner. The media, as a chronicle of tomorrow's history, owes an undeniable duty to the future to record events as

simple untailored facts. The analysis of the events and opinion thereon are a different genre altogether. The treatment of the two also thus has necessarily to be different. In times of crisis, facts unadorned and simply put, with due care and restraint, cannot be reasonably objected to in a democracy. However, a heavy responsibility devolves on the author of opinion articles. The author has to ensure that not only are his or her analysis free from any personal preferences, prejudices or notions, but also they are based on verified, accurate and established facts and do not tend to foment disharmony or enmity between castes, communities and races.

Insofar as the role of the Press Council is concerned, its prime objective is to awaken the press to the need for conforming to the highest ethical standards. Even in its quasi-judicial role the Press Council does not don the mantle of a taskmaster. Its aims not to punish but to act as a conscience keeper and advisor to provoke the media to introspect on the ethicality of its reportage. This is possible, only if cooperation is extended from all quarters including the press in its own interest.

Coming to the cases in hand, the Committee expressed its displeasure over the absence of Gujarat Samachar. It noted that Gujarati Samachar and Sandesh were leading dailies of the state that reached out to the people in the language they identified with. The impact of their reports was thus felt in every nook and corner of the State. The Committee appreciated the contention of the counsel for Sandesh that the paper had only abided by their duty to inform the public and while people had come forward to complain about some of their reporting the appeal carried by the paper for communal harmony and reports covering the incidents likely to promote peace were not brought to the fore. However, at the same time, the Committee felt that the paper had been negligent in basing its reports of 1.3.02 regarding mutilation of the bodies of two females allegedly kidnapped from the Sabarmati Express on the document/letter reportedly addressed to the Collector, Panchmahal, Godhra. This document did not mention the prime accusation in the news report and the material on record did not indicate that the veracity of the charge had been established at any stage. Further even though the reported incident had been publicly denied

and this denial reported by another paper, Sandesh did nothing to inform its readers about the same. Similarly the report relating to apprehension of increase in acts of terrorism after the return of Haj pilgrims appeared to aim at in creating a sensation on the surcharged atmosphere. The facts therein did not conform to the information given out by the concerned authorities. Though the committee did not accept the blanket condemnation of Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar as reported in the article of Batuk Vohra, it did not appreciate the headlines like "Godhra killings a challenge to the rise of Hindutva" in February 28, 2002 issue of Gujarat Samachar or even some of its later reports/articles that exhorted Hindus to rise as a class against the Muslims. The Committee noted that a greater onus lies in times of crisis on the regional media rather than the national media, in restoring the faith of the public in the law and order situation and encouraging communal harmony and amity.

The Committee accordingly recommends to the Council to censure the respondent dailies for the infraction of the norms & journalistic conduct some of the reports before it and to advise the media, including electronic media, to introspect on its role in the coverage of these riots, learn from its errors and ensure that in future at least its reportage serves to douse the passions of divisive forces and encourages the people of this country to rise above the division of caste and creed.

IX Objectionable clippings relating to Gujarat riots for suo-motu action against Vishva Hindu Samachar, Hindustan Times, Dainik Jagran, The Telegraph, Asian Age, Rashtriya Sahara and The Mainstream.

#### Complaint

The Press Council of India came across a series of news reports/articles/pictures published by a section of print media after the Godhra carnage and during riots in Gujarat, which it found prime facie to be sensational and exaggerated, propagating hate and fuelling disorder.

Suo-motu action was initiated against some of them under the provisions of section 13(1) read with Section 14(1) of the Press Council Act, 1978. These were :

1. Hindustan Times, New Delhi (dated 6.4.2002).  
Objectionable Title "Muslim school kids

- targeted in Gujarat".
2. Dainik Jagran (1.03.2002)  
provocative photographs under the caption "Jalta Gujarat".
3. Dainik Jagran (28.2.2002)  
Objectionable title "Do Hazar Logon Ne Chun-Chun Kar "Ramsevkaon" Ko Mara".
4. Vishva Hindu Samachar, Monthly, Title - "Third Face of Terrorism- Television Channels and English Newspapers", sourced from the Times of India issue dated 10.7.2002. Report captioned "VHP Monthly terms Modi Chhote Sardar" objectionable portion section of the media works on the policy of divide and rule, just like the Britishers. "When lakhs of Hindus are killed in Jammu and Kashmir, farm labourers butchered in Bihar and bomb blasts rock Andhra Pradesh, nobody asks the respective CMs to resign. Then why has Modi been targeted to step down?" it said.
5. The Telegraph, Kolkata (dated 11.04.2002)  
Objectionable title "If you don't like them, set them on fire".
6. The Telegraph, Kolkata (dated 17.04.2002)  
Title "Accused : minister in Modi govt." "Rape horrors in report" along with provocative photograph captioned "A rioter brandishes a stick during the violence on February 28".
7. The Telegraph (dated 26.03.2002)  
Title : "Talking about Gujarat"  
Objection : showing photograph of the remains of the burnt people.
8. The Asian Age dated 23.04.2002)  
Objectionable title "If you don't like people, kill them".
9. Rashtriya Sahara (dated 26.04.2002)  
Title : "Gujarat ke in Alpansankyon ka Allah Ke Sivay Koi Nahi".
10. The Mainstream (dated 27.04.2002)  
Title : Reflections on Gujarat Genocide.
11. The Asian Age (dated 04.04.2002)  
Objectionable photographs captioned "Communal Violence : A policeman inspects the charred remains of a Muslim in Abasna village in riot hit Gujarat on Wednesday. (Reuters)".  
Show-cause notices were issued to the Editors of aforesaid newspapers on 25.09.2002.

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### Written Statement of Mainstream

The respondent editor, Mainstream in his written statement dated 07.10.2002 stated that the journal, never published any material that could inflame base communal passions, rather it has always fought against any such trend in Indian journalism and will continue to do so in future.

Regarding the objectionable write up, the respondent submitted that it is the policy of the journal to accommodate diverse points of view. The write up in question was a communication received from Shri N. Jamal Ansari in response to an article by Mr. Batuk Vora and was accordingly published as a communication and not as an article. The respondent submitted that another article published in the issue dated 27.04.2002 under the heading "wake up or perish" presented totally different point of view.

According to the respondent a major section of the country's population felt humiliated and hurt after the incident of Gujarat and the journal has only accommodated their feeling in writing.

### Written statement of Dainik Jargan

The respondent editor, Dainik Jagran in his written statement dated 14.10.2002 submitted that the news item in question was based on facts and truth and nothing was exaggerated in it. Further their intention was not to inflame the communal tension, but rather to project the truth before the public.

The respondent further submitted that though the heading of the impugned news item was not wrong yet they will be more alert and conscious in future while selecting the head lines.

### Written statement of The Telegraph

The respondent editor, Telegraph, Kolkata submitted in his written statement dated 14.11.2002 that the Telegraph has been maintaining in the editorials/reports from Gujarat that the State did not witness a confrontation between antagonistic religious communities which is what a communal riot represent, but a concerted attack by Hindus on the Muslims with the intention to kill and destroy. Retaliation by Muslims was so few and far between as to be inconsequential. According to Telegraph, what happened in Gujarat in March-April 2002 was not a communal riot but a pogrom. Thus, the Telegraph believes that the guidelines laid down

for covering communal riots are not relevant in the present case.

### Written Statement of Rashtriya Sahara

The editor of Rashtriya Sahara in his written statement dated 19.4.2003 submitted that the Editor, "Communalism Combat", Ms. Tista Setalwad had prepared a report on Gujarat Riots and respondent newspaper among other newspapers brought the same before the public. The captioned news item was published in Rashtriya Sahara after having discussion with the riot victims Shri Saleem who had come to Delhi to meet Cabinet Ministers and National Commission for Minorities for providing protection and while publishing the said news they had no intention to provoke communal riots, rather the newspaper had even suppressed the contents of V.C.Ds given to them by the victims, which were provocative. In the last para of the news item they had even published the statement of Shri Mohammad Yakub, which speaks of the communal harmony. It was further submitted that while publishing the captioned news item they had taken adequate care and caution but if any part of the published news item was objectionable in the opinion of the Press Council, then the paper apologized for the same. The paper submitted that before coming to any conclusion the Enquiry Report of "Editors Guild of India" may also be considered.

### Reply of Vishwa Hindu Samachar

The counsel for Vishwa Hindu Samachar requested the Council vide his letter dated 21.10.2002 for details of the impugned report and was in response supplied the article of Times of India and the guidelines of the Council on communal writings.

### Appearance before the Inquiry Committee

When the matters came up for consideration before the Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad on 28th and 29th April 2003, there was no appearance before it. However the representative of Vishwa Hindu Samachar who had entered appearance, left after filing written submissions. Further, in response to the notice of hearing of the Council, the editor, Mainstream in his letter dated April 17, 2003 had submitted that he had nothing to add to the submissions made in the

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written statement.

The counsel for Vishwa Hindu Samachar in his letter dated 28.4.2003 submitted that the notice of hearing was prima facie contrary to the principles of natural justice and well settled legal position as it did not carry complete details about the show cause notice, charges for which inquiry was to be conducted or the documents relied upon.

#### Recommendations of the Inquiry Committee

The Inquiry Committee examined the material on record for a comprehensive view of the conduct of the press. The Committee opined that in the situation prevailing in Gujarat at that point the press had a prima facie duty to report the truth. The reports however needed to be so couched so as not to inflame communal passions. Yet several reports scanned by it carried sensational headlines and the body content thereof were also not worded in a way that would induce communal harmony. Not many papers covered the incidents that personified communal unity and brotherhood in the midst of communal madness. It recalled at this juncture the following guidelines already certified:

“News, views or comments relating to communal or religious disputes/clashes should be published after proper verification of facts and presented with due caution and restraint in manner which is conducive the creation of an atmosphere congenial to communal harmony, amity and peace. Sensational, provocative and alarming headlines are to be avoided. Acts of communal violence or vandalism should be reported in a manner as may not undermine the people’s confidence in the law and order machinery of the state. Giving community-wise figures of the victims of communal riot, or writing about the incident in a style which is likely to inflame passions, aggravate the tension, or accentuate the strained relations between the Communities/religious groups concerned, or which has a potential to exacerbate the trouble, should be avoided”.

The Committee expressed hope that the press will introspect on its coverage of riots and self determine its role in similar situations in future. The sensational coverage of the electronic media, which is still in a nascent stage, cannot serve as a yardstick for the print media that has more than a centuries experiences to fall back upon.

Moreover two wrongs do not make a right. Thus the Committee hopes that the press will be more diligent and restrained in the future. It feels that the media would be well advised to give due consideration to the implications and impact of its coverage of this and similar instances when truth and factual accuracy alone cannot be the criterion to determine the suitability of a publication that could as well foment passions as douse them.

The Inquiry Committee recommends to the Council to dispose of the matter with these observations.

X.: Reference from an anonymous complainant regarding publication of an objectionable photograph in The Hindustan Times, New Delhi.

#### Complaint

The Secretariat of the Press Council received an anonymous complaint on 18.3.2002 against The Hindustan Times, New Delhi regarding publication of a photograph in its issue dated 5.3.2002, under the by-line of Kaushik Ramaswamy/HT, showing a four year old child who had sustained 90% burns during riots in Ahmedabad. The footnote appended to the said photograph read as follows - “Haunted look: Four year old Asif who sustained 90% burns, died a few hours after this picture was taken at the civil hospital in Ahmadabad on Monday. All nine members of the boy’s family were earlier killed in the riots in Narod”. According to the complainant, the photograph was intended to create tension in the minds of minority community arid to provoke them to violence and also to confuse the people.

Comments of the respondent The Hindustan Times, New Delhi were invited on 17.6.2002.

#### Appearance before the Inquiry Committee

The matter was called out for hearing before the Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad on 28th April, 2003 when the respondent’s counsel, Shri Gaurav Mathur, sought adjournment. The matter was adjourned to the next day when he again appeared and filed comments at the time of hearing on behalf of the respondent-Hindustan Times.

Learned counsel for the respondent newspaper in his written statement dated

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28.4.2003 raised preliminary objection to the effect that complaint was not maintainable as it was from an unknown person who had not complied with the procedure laid down under Section 3 (1) (a) and Section 3 (1) (c) of the Press Council (Procedure for Inquiry) Regulations, 1979. It was submitted that the Hon'ble Press Council of India had also not only called upon the paper to file its comments in place of issuing show cause notice to the Hindustan Times Ltd. and/or its Editor so as to enable them to file a written statement in defence prior to calling upon the Hindustan Times Ltd. to appear before the Inquiry Committee for the hearing. He requested that the complaint should be dismissed in limine and the proceeding for hearing and inquiry be dropped, in the interest of justice.

#### Hearing before the Committee

The Counsel for the Hindustan Times in his oral arguments reiterated the preliminary objection. The counsel, however, proceeded to make his submissions on merits, on the advise of the Inquiry Committee to present a defence on the substance of the charges instead of going into technicalities as the object of the Press Council was to instil ethics rather than to punish. On merits, the counsel for the Hindustan Times argued that the reporter was prompted to publish the photograph of the child to show the difference between the pleasant and unpleasant situations. Further, the reporter had duly verified the facts as required. The only motive behind the publication of the photograph was compassion and sympathy for human beings. Every care had been taken to avoid passing any judgment or appending offensive remarks to the impugned photograph. However, he emphasized that the mentioning the name of the victim was incidental and in fact the reporter expected the people to be sufficiently moved by the photograph to refrain from further rioting. He added that the photograph was entrenched in the then prevalent circumstances and was newsworthy and that it was not the intention of the newspaper to inflame passion.

#### Recommendations of the Inquiry Committee

The Inquiry Committee considered the photograph, its caption and the written submissions as well as oral arguments advanced by the Respondent. The Inquiry Committee noted

that the counsel for the Hindustan Times had justified the publication of the photograph on the ground that it was published to awaken the readers to the outcome of violence and wrath involving even the innocent children. The Inquiry Committee felt that the publication of the photograph was a borderline case as the eye-catching photograph positioned on the front page evoked simultaneously, the feelings of revulsion and sympathy. However, it opined that the name of the victim given in the caption below the photograph and reference about the family could have been avoided since it had appeared at a time when tension was all pervasive and could, in the circumstances, have the tendency to arouse anger of the minority community during riots.

The Inquiry Committee recalled Norm 23 of the Guide to Journalistic Ethics, reproduced as follows :— “Photo-journalism is an important part of the print media. While intrusion through photography into personal grief likely to hurt sentiments or arouse communal passions, should be avoided, publication of photographs serving the larger public interest can not be termed as unethical or in bad taste.” At the same time, another norm (24 C of the Guide to Journalistic Ethics) advises the press to avoid mentioning the names of communities of the victims of the riots. The editor should have thus been more vigilant in allowing the publication of the photograph with the caption appended.

A question had arisen before the Inquiry Committee whether the reporter or the newspaper had any mens rea in publishing the photograph to inflame passion or arouse ill feelings in the minds of the public, in general or particular. The Inquiry Committee found the answer in negative, as the publication of the photograph of the child wrapped in bandage could well be an eye-opener for the rioters. The press, however, would be well advised to give due consideration to the implication and impact of its coverage of this and similar instances when truth and factual accuracy alone cannot be criterion to determine the suitability of a publication that could as well foment passions as douse them. No hard and fast rules can be laid down in the matter and the editor has to allow his conscience to guide him up the path of ethical rectitude.

The Inquiry Committee recommends to the Council to dispose of the matter with these

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observations.

XI-XIII.

Shri Hindumal M. Shah,  
Andhra Pradesh,

*Versus*

1. Deccan Chronicle,
2. Hyderabad.

### Complaint

This undated complaint received by the Council on 12.4.2002 was filed by Shri Hindumal M. Shah of Kurnool, Adoni (Andhra Pradesh) against Deccan Chronicle, Hyderabad issues dated 2.4.2002 and 29.4.2002. The complainant drew the attention of the Council to the first article that accused two ministers of the Gujarat Cabinet, Shri Ashok Bhatt and Shri I. K. Jadeja of sitting in Police Control Room to direct the killings on 28.2.2002. Captioned : "Hindutva as a Cast Weapon" by Shri Praful Bidwai in issue dated 2.4.2002, the impugned comment reads as follow:

"Indeed new evidence is emerging of the shocking role played by two of Modi's own Cabinet colleagues on the crucial first day of the post-Godhra violence. Health Minister Ashok Bhatt and Urban Development Minister I. K. Jadeja personally occupied police control rooms on February 28 to direct the "revenge" attacks. It is during their presence there that former MP Ehsan Jafri's desperate; six hour-long appeals for rescue were ignored before he was charred to death. That was also the beginning of the Naroda Patiya butchery of 90 Muslims. The activities of the first day set the stage for the massacre that followed."

The complainant submitted that if the allegations are proved, the concerned ministers should be punished otherwise the author of the impugned news item should suffer severe punishment for indirectly provoking people. He pointed out that the impugned comment had been further highlighted separately in a box to the article.

In his further complaint lay against the article of 29.4.2002 by (Late) Shri Abu Abraham Captioned "The Truth About Godhra" which reproduced, from Mainstream, a version providing reasons behind the massacre at Godhra. It concluded, "Reliable sources have reported all this information and cannot be doubted." The

complainant expressed his disbelief about the narration reproduced by the writer of the incident leading to the Godhra carnage.

The complainant urged strong action to admonish writers and publisher who he alleged indulge in this dangerous game in the prevailing situations intended "not to heal wounds but only to keep them alive". Requesting the Council to take necessary action in the matter he wondered whether the author had made personal inquiries to write the "truth" after two months. He also complained against the article by Shri Prem Shankar Jha in Outlook giving out the same story but the Chairman of the Press Council on preliminary examination found that this matter did not disclose a preliminary ground for inquiry as Shri Jha appeared to be the lone columnist who had cared to check the authenticity of the provocative e-mail relating to Godhra incident and written that the report being circulated was false. He infact deserved to be praised for his efforts.

### Comments

Comments of the respondent Deccan Chronicle were invited on 25.6.2002. The editor Deccan Chronicle in his written statement dated 24.5.2003 submitted that the complaints were with regard to articles written by two eminent writers, one of whom, Abu Abraham, has since passed away. Both writers clearly mention, as can be made out from reading of the articles that they were quoting from various sources. It was with considerable thought due consideration and care to their enormous reputations that Bidwai and Abraham wrote those words. Their articles were to be viewed in the context of time when they were written and the event, which they were writing about.

It was further submitted that the complainant was a chronic letter writer to newspapers including Deccan Chronicle and he appeared to have taken delight in firing his guns from the shoulder of the Press Council. Besides in no way was he an injured party. If they disagreed with what was published, there were other fora for him to vent his emotions.

### Appearance before the Inquiry Committee

The matter were called out for hearing before the Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad on 28-29th April 2003. Neither the complainant nor the

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respondent was represented before it.

#### Recommendations of the Inquiry Committee

The Committee on careful consideration of the material on record noted that the subject matter of these complaints were two articles, one written by Shri Praful Bidwai and the other by late Shri Abu Abraham. The respondent editor had defended the publication of the articles on the ground that the articles were written by renowned persons who had also quoted various sources in the same. The Committee did not fully agree with the defence of the editor. It was of the opinion that though the articles were written by reputed persons, the space for them had been provided by the editor. The editor should thus have examined and satisfied himself about the propriety of publishing such articles as have the tendency of inciting communal feelings and promote discord and mistrust. The information in the impugned articles had the tendency to arouse and indirectly fan violence. The contents of the article, the Committee opined, warranted factual verification in view of the prevailing scenario at that time as had been done by another writer Shri Prem Shankar Jha. However, the Committee accepted that the newspaper was not directly responsible for the impugned story. The Committee, therefore, recommended to the Council to allow the matter to rest with an advise to the editor to screen carefully articles likely to affect public sentiments in times of crisis and be more circumspect in their selection for publication.

XIV.

Major Gen. Don Patrick (Retd.),

Ooty, Tamil Nadu

Versus

The Hindu, Chennai.

#### Complaint

Major Gen. (Retd.) Don Patrick of Ooty, Tamil Nadu in his communication dated 18.04.2002 addressed to The Hindu, Chennai, with a copy inter-alia endorsed to Press Council of India for appropriate action, objected to publication of an article captioned "Mr. Vajpayee, the Swayamsevak" by Shri Kuldeep Nayyar in its "Opinion" column dated 16.04.2002. His specific objection was to the statement "this scheme of exterminating a particular community had been

prepared long before Godhra and would have been carried out even without the gruesome Godhra incident."

Shri Don Patrick in his letter to the Council and to respondent paper allegedly raised as many as 14 questions with regard to planning of the riots and submitted that the author owes it to the public and concerned citizens to answer the questions. The complainant averred that if Shri Nayyar had shared the secret information before the Godhra incident, the carnage that followed could have been prevented. The complainant's version was published in The Hindu, issue dated 22.04.2002.

#### No Comments

Comments of the respondent editor, The Hindu, Chennai were invited on 17.06.2002. No reply was filed. However, in response to the notice for hearing, the paper asked for another copy of the complaint and then contended that they were unable to understand the complaint and that since they received several letters daily, they might have missed out the complainant's letter.

#### Appearance before the Inquiry Committee

The matter was called out for hearing before the Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad on April 28-29, 2003. The notice of hearing sent to the complainant was received back from the courier company with the remarks "please give phone number". The address of the complainant is correct but no phone number is available on the letter of the complainant. In the circumstances, the Committee decided to deal the matter on its merits.

#### Recommendations of the Inquiry Committed

On perusal of the record, the Committee noted that the complainant had referred to a particular statement in the impugned article and raised some questions regarding the nature of the scheming/pre-planning of the riots and as to whether Shri Kuldeep Nayyar had shared this information with the authorities. The Hindu having published the article of Shri Nayyar had also promptly accorded space to the letter of the complainant in full to allow the readers to judge the issue. It had thus acted in due compliance with the ethics of journalism. Therefore, the Committee opined that no further action was needed in the matter. It

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recommends to the Council to allow the matter to rest accordingly.

XV.  
Dr. K.P. Hardas,  
Nagpur, Maharashtra  
*Versus*  
Indian Express,  
Mumbai.

### Complaint

This complaint dated 16.4.2002 was filed by Dr. K.P. Hardas, Nagpur against The Indian Express, Mumbai for publication of an article captioned "Muharram arrived too soon" with sub-caption "Can we salvage anything from the debris in Gujarat?" by Shri Mushirul Hassan in its issue dated 20.3.2002 and for non publication of his letter written to the editor in response thereto. The complainant has alleged that the article in question was deceptive and petty. The complainant in his open letter addressed directly to the author of the article, Prof. Mushirul Hassan, had stated that the article gave an impression that the judicial enquiry ordered by the Gujarat Government ought to be cancelled as the author in the article had given a final judgment that RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal - a BJP combine carried out the carnage against innocent Gujarati speaking Khojas, Boharas, Memons. Countering the author's observations one by one the complainant had concluded that the loss of human lives is loss of human lives and it did not matter which religion they practiced.

Comments of respondent Indian Express, Mumbai were invited on 17.6.2002.

### Comments

The respondent editor, Indian Express, Nagpur in his comments dated 27.6.2002, submitted that the "letter to the editor" was not sent to the editor at Nagpur but to the editor-in-chief at Delhi, hence it could not be published. He also adverted to the fact that three months had since elapsed and the letter was no longer topical or relevant. The Resident Editor further submitted that the paper had over the last several months carried both sides of the issue involved, giving them ample coverage. Prof Mushirul Hassan's article covered one such viewpoint. Quoting from the Norm laid down by the Council he submitted

that the editor enjoys wide discretionary power in selection and publication of any material in a newspaper. The respondent submitted that the letter of the complainant contains personal remarks and references to Dr. Mushirul Hassan, author of the article. However, the respondent would welcome any letter from the complainant on current topics.

A copy of the comments was forwarded to the complainant on 24.7.2002.

### Appearance before the Inquiry Committee

The matter was called out for hearing before the Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad on 28 - 29th April 2003. The complainant Dr. K.P. Hardas appeared in person while there was no appearance on behalf of the respondent newspaper.

### Submissions before the Inquiry Committee

The complainant in his oral submissions contended that he had written an open letter to Prof. Mushirul Hassan, the author of the article and a copy of the same was sent to the editor of Indian Express. Since this was an open letter, the newspaper was morally obliged to publish the same. He added that it was incorrect to publish opinion articles when a Judicial Commission had been appointed and had not given its report. By publishing the article the author had defamed the whole country. He further stated that he was in the habit of studying all the articles of public interest and had been making an in-depth study of the articles and offering his views on them. In the past also his open letters addressed to eminent authors had been published/responded to.

### Recommendations of the Inquiry Committee

The Inquiry Committee carefully considered the material on record and the oral submissions of the complainant. It noted that the impugned article commented on a matter of vital public interest. The complainant as an enlightened citizen of the country had given his valuable views on the same, though he has not been able to produce before the Committee a copy of the covering letter addressed to the paper. The respondent editor in his written statement has also offered to publish any letter by complainant on a current topic. The Committee observed that though the editor had laid emphasis on the need for topicality of the

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subject of the letter, Dr. Hardas's comments were prompted by public interest. Thus, if he writes a fresh letter to the editor on the issue without making any personal remarks against the author, the Indian Express should consider publishing the same. Before parting with the matter the Committee recorded its appreciation of the keen interest shown by Dr. K.P. Hardas in the in-depth study of articles of public interest and formulating his opinion thereon.

The Inquiry Committee recommends to the Council to dispose of the matter in terms of the above observations.

XVI.

The President,  
Jeevit Hindusthan,  
Kolkata.

*Versus*

The Telegraph.  
Kolkata.

#### Complaint

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi forwarded to the Press Council of India a copy of the letter dated 22nd May, 2002 of the President, Jeevit Hindusthan, Kolkata drawing the attention of the Home Ministry, Government of India towards the publication of a photograph in "The Telegraph" dated 22.5.2002 with the request to take appropriate action. In the impugned photograph an old Muslim is shown collecting papers, may be of a book and the caption to it say, "A 73-years-old man collects the ashes of the Quran in Ahmedabad (AFP)".

The President, Jeevit Hindusthan has alleged that such publicity could incite hatred among the people and increase tension in the disturbed areas. He has submitted the media should give support to peace and normalcy instead of putting fuel in the fire.

#### No Written Statement:

A show cause notice was issued to The Telegraph, Kolkata on 9.8.2002.

No reply has been filed.

#### Appearance-before the Inquiry Committee

When the matter was called out for hearing before the Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad on 28-

29th April 2003, there was no appearance before it from either side.

#### Recommendations of the Inquiry Committee

The Inquiry Committee carefully perused the impugned photograph. In the photograph an old man is shown who is collecting the burnt paper. But for the title of the photograph no one can say that those were the burnt pages of Quran, which the old man was collecting. It is the caption that might have hurt the religious sentiments of the community. In a situation when communal violence was on, the editor should have been more diligent in giving the caption. The Committee thus advised the respondent editor to be more careful in future in publishing news reports/ photographs in tense situations. It recommends to the Council accordingly.

XVII.

Dr. Krishen Kak, IAS,  
New Delhi

*Versus*

The Times of India  
New Delhi.

#### Complaint

This complaint dated 9.4.2002 was filed by Shri Krishen Kak, IAS (Retd.), New Delhi against The Times of India for publishing an allegedly objectionable article on Gujarat riots titled "Hindustan Hamara - I can never sing that song again" by Shri Harsh Mander in the issue dated 20.3.2002. The impugned article had also been circulated over the web under the title "Cry the Beloved Country".

The impugned article labelled the incidents in Gujarat as a planned massacre when civil and police administration abdicated responsibility and the famed Gujarati philanthropy was nowhere in evidence. The article lamented that the loss Muslims suffered appeared to be of concern only to them.

The complainant submitted that it was highly improper of the writer of the impugned article, Shri Harsh Mander, an IAS officer on deputation to a British charity called Action-aid, to publicly air his politico-religious views, and accuse the state administration of connivance in the violence. The complainant also questioned the credentials of the author.

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The complainant alleged that. Mr. Mander's article was highly irresponsible, blatantly biased and there was nothing in it to show that he had verified the stories that he passed off as facts. According to the complainant the published article and its language was biased, inflammatory, damaging to public morale and faith in the government, serving to increase communal hatred, offensive to public sensibilities and designed to undermine the rule of law. He also alleged there had been a complete failure on part of the editor of Times of India to perform the basic editing function of checking on the facts, and to maintain a high professional standard, sense of responsibility and public service. The complainant has alleged that the writer, the editor and the newspaper have colluded to condemn an entire class of service officers, a community, and a state administration in a witch-hunting trial by the media.

#### No Comments:

Comments of the respondent were invited on 17.6.2002. No reply was filed.

#### Appearance before the Inquiry Committee

The matter was called out for hearing before the Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad on 28-29th April 2003. There was no appearance before it. However, in response to the notice of hearing the complainant who was Delhi based, vide his letter dated 17.4.2003 expressed his inability to attend the hearing at Ahmedabad.

#### Recommendations of the Inquiry Committee

At the outset the Committee considered the objections of the complainant about hearing of the case being scheduled at Ahmedabad. The Committee observed that as the Committee at Ahmedabad was dealing with all the cases relating to the reportage of the incidents of violence at Gujarat, it was appropriate to hear the instant matter also at Ahmedabad. The presence of the complainant was not necessary, as he had already given all the facts in his complaint. Thus, the Inquiry Committee overruled the objections of the complainant.

Before dealing the matter on merits, the Inquiry Committee expressed its deep concern over the indifferent and irresponsible attitude of the Times of the India in not filing its comments

in response to Council's letter dated 17.6.2002 and in not being represented before the Inquiry Committee to present its defence in a matter of great public importance.

On merits of the case the Committee noted that article at several points reiterated rumours that were being circulated at the relevant time. The truthfulness of the facts mentioned therein had not been established at any point of time till then but Shri Mander had chosen to base his views and sentiments on them, and put pen to the opinion thus formed by him. This is not to say that the said incidents may not have taken place at all but in the situation prevailing at that time, it was not very easy to sift fact from rumours and conjecture and it was expected of the author as a responsible serving officer as well as of the respondent paper of repute like the Times of India, to be more restrained and circumspect in pronouncing a denouncement of the whole system in a communally surcharged atmosphere. The Committee feels that a greater responsibility devolved on the editor of the paper in exercising his discretion to select articles for publication in such a situation. The Committee recommended to the Council to advise the Times of India accordingly.

*Foot Note: Ms. Sabina Inderjeet, member did not participate in the deliberations for the reason of her association with the Times of India.*

XVIII-XXI.

1. Shri Sharad C. Mishma,
2. Dr. DN. Gadhok,
3. Shri Har Dayal Bhalla
4. Shri D.C. Gupta,  
(Mumbai)

Versus

The Times of India,  
Mumbai

#### Complaint

Shri Sharad C. Mishma, Former Economic Adviser, Ministry of Railways, Government of India, (ii) Dr. D.N. Gadhok, Former Director, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, (iii) Shri Har Dayal Bhalla, Former General Manager, Western Railway and (iv) Dr. D.C. Gupta, Former President, Birla Yamaha & Indian Tools Ltd. Mumbai filed this joint complaint dated 23.4.2002 against the Times of India, Mumbai edition

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alleging transgression of the norms of journalistic ethics.

The complainants submitted that by publishing an article captioned:

“The Mask is Off-A Tale of Two Hindus” by Siddharth Varadarajan on 19.4.2002 and a report captioned : “UK mission report may put Modi in dock” on 20.4.2002, the respondent, Times of India has violated the norms of journalistic conduct prescribed by Press Council of India which enjoin on the Press to eschew publication of inaccurate, baseless, graceless, misleading or distorted material.

The box to the impugned article captioned: “The Mask is off” states “a Hindu woman killed for saving her Muslim friend in Gujarat has shown more courage and dignity than Prime Minister Vajpayee BJP’s project of “Hindu” separatism will bring disaster to Indians.” The attack on Gujarat’s Muslims is an attack on all Indians”.

The complainants have submitted that in the impugned article, “the macabre description of Geetaben’s dead body is imaginary based on her photograph reportedly sent by the resident editor of the Times of India two weeks ago. From the strident tone of the article it is felt that the author had deliberately gained time to equip himself for the competitive race in Modi-bating projecting himself and the newspaper he works for as the champion of the so called secularism. Rather than trying to restore communal harmony he has tried to open the old wounds. No evidence has been adduced in the article to authenticate the description of the lady having been stripped, dragged naked and killed due to her having been in love with a Muslim boy nor has the reporter stated that he was himself an eyewitness to the incident.” The complainants have submitted that the “author’s intention is malafide to discredit the Hindu Community as a whole. His article has helped to add fuel to the communal fire raging in Gujarat.”

Regarding the second impugned news item captioned : “UK mission report may put Modi in dock” - “Riots victims families could move British courts to try Gujarat CM”, the complainants have submitted that the author has deliberately tried to internationalize the role of Shri Narendra Modi, Chief Minister for allegedly engineering the Gujarat riots by using sensational remarks. The author has deliberately added international

dimensions to the case and is thus guilty of spoiling India’s friendly relations with other countries and tarnishing her fair image in the world.

The complainants have submitted that being responsible citizens of India they have filed this complaint in public interest and have requested the Council to inquire into the matter and to take action against the respondent newspaper for tarnishing the fair image of the country in general and Hindu community in particular which believes in the philosophy of the Sarv Dharm Sambhav, both within the country and outside.

#### No Comments

Comments of the respondent The Times of India, Mumbai were invited on 13.6.2002. There was no response.

#### Appearance before the Inquiry Committee

When the matters were called out for hearing before the Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad on 28-29th April 2003, neither the complainants nor the respondent appeared before it. The complainants had, by a letter dated April 17, 2003 expressed their inability to appear before the Committee due to their old age. They had requested the Council to take appropriate action in the matter on the basis of the material already sent by them.

#### Recommendations of the Inquiry Committee

At the outset the Inquiry Committee noted the absence of the Times of India and observed that it expected better co-operation from leading newspapers. It expressed its displeasure over the callous attitude of the Times of India in neither filing the written statement in response to the Council’s letter dated 13.6.2002 nor being represented before the Inquiry Committee to defend their case. The Committee then proceeded to consider the matter on its merits. The Committee carefully perused the articles. It was of the view that the impugned articles cannot be equated to news items. The author has, in the said articles, given his opinion on the situation and in doing so incidentally commented on incidents reported by various fora and also referred to the views expressed by many responsible people on the course of action followed by the governmental machinery. The Committee opined that the newspaper could not be faulted for giving

space to the opinion of the author, who was, as a citizen, as much entitled to his opinion, as any other citizen. Hence, it felt that no further action is warranted in the matter. It recommended to the Council accordingly.

Foot Note : Ms. Sabina Inderjit, member did not participate in the deliberations on account of her association with the Times of India.

XXII-XXIV

Shri V.D. Mishra,  
Commissioner of Police,  
Vs.

Aurangabad.

(I) The Editor, Tarun Bharat.

(II) The Editor, Saamna.

(III) The Editor, Vishwamitra.

### Complaint

Shri V.D. Mishra, Commissioner of Police, Aurangabad filed three complaints dated

23.05.2002 alleging publication of exaggerated and provocative news items in local news papers of Aurangabad following the Godhra incident in Gujarat.

The complainant has submitted that subsequent to the tragic incident at Godhra in Gujarat on 27.02.2002, the local newspapers of Aurangabad started publishing exaggerated, biased, inciting and irritating news items, creating communal hatred thereby exciting the feelings of both the communities. The complainant alleged that the daily papers such as "Tarun Bharat", "Saamna" & "Vishwamitra" had played a leading role in highlighting the incidents and flaring communal hatred between Hindus and Muslims by publishing highly provocative, baseless and exaggerated news. The English translations of the captions of the news items supplied by the complainant are as follows :

S.No.	Name of Daily News Paper	Date	Published News Headlines
1.	Tarun Bharat	07.03.2002	Stone pelting, arson at Bhigarin Nagar, Curfew imposed. (25 die in fresh violence in Gujarat)
2.	-do-	14.03.2002	Who won & who lost?
3.	-do-	12.04.2002	Hindus are real enemy of Hindu.
4.	-do-	12.04.2002	Hindus are dead & culprits are Hindus
5.	Saamna	11.03.2002	Gandhar to Godhra. Islamic world is involved in Terrorism.
6.	-do-	12.03.2002	Instigation came from the Mosque to burn Ramsevaks in Godhra.
7.	-do-	15.03.2002	Godhra fire incidence is Islamic Tradition.
8.	-do-	15.03.2002	Recognized thefts at Ayodhya.
9.	-do-	21.03.2002	Godhra incidence took place because Ramsevak kidnapped Muslim girl.
10.	-do-	09.04.2002	Sangh Branches increased in Gujarat after riot.
11.	-do-	17.04.2002	Hindustani Muslim not problems but disaster.
12.	-do-	17.04.2002	Hindu's goodness is in the hands of polite Hindus.
13.	Vishwamitra	04.03.2002	Lots of Mosques Destroyed, Females are raped, Govt. supplying petroleum articles to goonda's team.
14.	-do-	06.03.2002	Effects of Gujarat riots reached upto Muslim justice of High Court.
15.	-do-	07.03.2002	Hindu's value is Rs. Two lakhs and Muslim value is only one lakh in Gujarat.
16.	-do-	09.03.2003	Violence in Gujarat started from the incidence of Sabarmati Express (The detailed investigation made by the Washington Post)
17.	-do-	10.03.2002	Killings of Muslims, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu disturbed, likely to withdraw Support to Vajpayee Government (Ayodhya is responsible for violence & bleeding)
18.	-do-	11.03.2002	70 Crore Rupees damaged in only 12 days, will rich Gujarat become Beggar (Dangerous reflections of Hindu terrorism & evil miracle).
19.	-do-	12.03.2002	Mr.Singhal, Togadiya & Ramchanrandas who are scare to Government & court are completely free. (Then why arrest of Mr. Kamran & Yunus Siddiqi)
20.	-do-	13.03.2002	Caretaker of general people Aslam Bhure as given in tension to all others including central Govt. All are awaiting judgement of supreme court). (Emergency construction at judgement of Supreme court)

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21.	-do-	14.03.2002	Supreme Court warns Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Restricted not to interfere. Those who are taking political advantage of Hinduism are feared.
22.	-do-	16.03.2002	Ayodhya drama flops due to lack of effective dialogues, emotional scene & sweet music.
23.	-do-	03.04.2002	Collected Muslim's addresses from Corporation, Telephone exchange & Election list (No relation between Godhra & Gujarat riots)
24.	-do-	05.04.2002	Godhra incidence; Received E-mail of important information of Those Karsevak.
25.	-do-	08.04.2002	Vajpayee visited Gujarat, cried but could not cross "Laxman Rekha" (Alert if tried to touch Mr. Modi)
26.	-do-	11.04.2002	Show the proof how your relative died in Gujarat riot otherwise help could not be given (Atrocities to Muslims in Gujarat from Modi)
27.	-do-	16.04.2002	"Vajpayee Sabse Bada Papi Hai, woh Girgit Ki Taraha rang badalta hai" (Ramsevak themselves started Gujarat Riots)

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The complainant alleged that all the above-impugned news items were damaging and intended to create disharmony. The complainant requested the Council to warn the respondent newspapers for inflaming communal passions.

Comments of respondents Saamna, Tarun Bharat and Vishwamitra were invited on 17.06.2002.

#### Comments - Vishwamitra

The Executive editor, Vishwamitra in his written statement dated 17.07.2002 while denying the allegation of the complainant, submitted that it is unjust and unfortunate to dub the newspapers communal. According to the respondent it is the duty of the newspapers to publish all the facts freely and fearlessly. While doing this, every precaution had been taken regarding its impartiality and sensitivity. The respondent has submitted that the newspapers held in high respect the sentiments of the people belonging to the other community. The news items questioned by the complainant hurt not a single person. The daily did not receive a single complaint, in this regard. The complainant as the Police Commissioner of Aurangabad had neither objected to any news nor intimated his resentment during this period, nor did he make any request to the newspapers against publishing the said news items. All the news items published between March 4<sup>th</sup> April 16<sup>th</sup> were nothing different from what was shown on the various news channels, and published in national dailies and newsmagazines, averred the respondent.

The respondent further submitted that the

newspaper never indulged in acts like inciting people and spreading communal hatred and it has played a very constructive role in Aurangabad. According to him the Police Commissioner himself had acknowledged and admired this fact several times in the past.

A copy of the comments was forwarded to the complainant on 20.08.2002.

#### Counter-comments

Shri V.D. Mishra, Commissioner of Police, Aurangabad in his counter comments dated 17.10.2002 has submitted that the respondent daily cannot claim innocence. According to him it should have restrained itself from publishing provocative news items. Denying the statements made by the respondent, the complainant reiterated that all the impugned news items of "Vishwamitra" were damaging.

The complainant has requested the Council to direct the, respondent to desist from publishing such provocative news endangering the democratic setup and secular concept of the country.

A copy of the counter comments was forwarded to the respondent "Vishwamitra" on 03.01.2003.

No comments were filed by the other respondents.

#### Appearance before the Inquiry Committee

The matter was called out for hearing before the Inquiry Committee at Ahmedabad on 28-29<sup>th</sup> April 2003. Shri Abdul Kadeer, Assistant Editor represented the newspaper, Vishwamitra while there was no appearance on behalf of the other

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respondents i.e. Tarun Bharat and Saamna. Complainant was also not represented.

#### Submissions before the Inquiry Committee

Shri Abdul Kadeer representative of Vishwamitra submitted that the complainant, the Commissioner of Police, never objected orally or in writing to the impugned news reports. He never intimated that due to publication of the reports, peace in the city was being disturbed. He justified the publication on the ground that those were based on the incidents, which took place in Gujarat, and that the reports were also based on the interviews taken and news broadcast on television and the paper could not be blamed for reproducing the statement of others. He stressed that no communal violence took place or peace was disturbed due to the impugned publications.

Shri Kadeer was advised by the Committee that while the prime objective of the press was certainly to inform, it had also to ensure that the reports were free from any slant or bias as also served to wean the people away from communal passion and enmity. It was also not necessary that the immediate repercussion of the allegedly inflammatory report should be visible in the law and order situation. The Press Council as a body enjoined to instil ethics had to examine the sum and substance of the effect of these reports. The representative was called upon to give an undertaking to desist from publishing such news reports in future. The representative of the Vishwamitra, verbally assured the Committee that the newspaper will not publish such reports in future, but did not give the undertaking in writing.

#### Recommendations of the Inquiry Committee

The Inquiry Committee considered the material on record. It noted that all the three newspapers had published a series of news reports, with provocative headlines and a tendency to inflame communal enmity between the two communities. They had thus violated Press Council's guidelines advising caution in reporting communal riots. It is worthwhile to reiterate the guideline here for the benefit of all :-

“News, views or comments relating to communal or religious disputes/clashes should

be published after proper verification of facts and presented with due caution and restraint in a manner which is conducive to the creation of an atmosphere congenial to communal harmony, amity and peace. Sensational, provocative and alarming headlines are to be avoided. Acts of communal violence or vandalism should be reported in a manner as may not undermine the people's confidence in the law and order machinery of the State. Giving community-wise figures of the victims of communal riot, or writing about the incident in a style which is likely to inflame passions, aggravate the tension, or accentuate the strained relations between the communities/religious groups concerned, or which has a potential to exacerbate the trouble, should be avoided”.

The Committee hoped that in future at least the press will appreciate the power it wields upon the public opinion and desist from making any remarks or carrying reports that kind be rather than douse the flames of communal passions. Insofar as the cases in hand are concerned, the Inquiry Committee recommends to the Council to “warn” all the three newspapers for reporting in violation of the norms of ethical reporting.

#### Decision of the Council

On consideration of the records of the cases and reports of the Inquiry Committee and having discussed the matter in detail, the Council accepts the reasons, findings and recommendation of the Committee in the matters and decides accordingly.

#### Conclusion

Before parting with these cases, the Press Council expresses its deep concern about the future, and the role of media.

It must always be remembered that the carnage has given a terrible shock to India's fair secular name. It was a national shame. There is no need to reiterate norms that media has to adhere to in such situation. However now there is a greater moral responsibility on the media to do their best to build up the national solidarity and to recement the communal harmony at all level remembering the noble role they had played during the pre-independence days.

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# The New Footsoldiers!

## The Ideological and Institutional Incorporation of Dalits into Hindutva Maelstrom

*Subhash Gatade*

Delhi, INDIA

...Continued from previous issue

### **JAI HINDUTVA NOT JAI BHEEM : ENTER THE FANATIC DALIT !**

What is common between Rameshbhai Parmar, Valjibhai Patel and Anandi Parmar or for that matter Tikajibhai? Well, as the name signifies all of them are Gujaratis, but the more important aspect of their being is that they are that part of the Ambedkarite/Dalit movement in Gujarat which refused to be part of the 'genocidal politics' of the Hindutva brigade when the stakes were high. Definitely it has not proved to be a catwalk for them when the post Godhra mayhem organised by the Parivar with due connivance with the state machinery was at its peak. They had to bear the brunt of the Hindutva goons while some of their own people decided to either join hands with their perpetrators or just stood mute. Anandi Parmar, a veteran activist of the Dalit movement was himself attacked, Tikajibhai's, another senior activists' house was set on fire and Rameshbhai Parmar, one of the founders of the Gujarati Dalit Literature had to face prolonged alienation. As far as Valjibhai Patel, one of the founders of the shortlived Dalit Panther movement, is concerned he received series of threats for not falling in line.

It need not be emphasised that such people who can think and act independently and yearn for an independent assertion of Dalits as envisaged by Dr. Ambedkar do not have any place in the Sangh gameplan. In fact, in the post genocide phase when sinister attempts were on to further intimidate, terrorize the religious minorities planned attempt were also undertaken

to browbeat those sections of Ambedkarites or independent Dalits and tribals formally into the Hindutva fold who had refused to toe the line.

As opposed to Rameshbhai Parmar, Valjibhai Patel and Anandi Parmar Sangh prefers people who may be born into one of those oppressed communities but who are ready to peddle the Hindutva line. People like Ramesh Patange, Kishore Macwana and Madan Dilawar and many of their ilk represent this new Dalit 'face' of the Sangh Parivar. People who are ready to present a new sanitised image of Ambedkar as a Hindu social reformer, as someone who was opposed to Muslims. People who have found a new commonality between the ideas of Ambedkar and Golwalkar or who find Ambedkar to be an extension of Hedgewar.

At present Ramesh Patange is a senior leader of the *Samajik Samarasta Manch* floated by the Sangh Parivar and also part of the editorial team of their Marathi organ *Vivek*, Kishore Macwana formally edits the RSS journal *Sadhana* in Gujarat and Madan Dilawar, is a minister in Vasundhara Raje's cabinet and one who was said to be instrumental in the anti-Christian tirade in his home district.

Of course the creation of Hindutvaised Dalits or devising mechanism for co-option Ambedkar, has not been a very easy affair for the Sangh Parivar. One can say that there was a transition period during which RSS tried its hands at different ways to deal with the Dalit issue. For the Sangh which had till then followed a very conservative, non-reformist type of Hinduism, which had no place for the Dalits, it had not been very easy for it to arrive at full proof single plan to deal with the challenge posed by Ambedkar. But the key thing to remember is that the man who led the RSS from

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a *Chaturvarnya* based exclusive type of Hindutva to a more inclusive type of Hindutva was Balasaheb Deoras, the third supremo of RSS. He gave a piece of his mind in 'Hindu Unity and Social Equality' (1974). In fact Deoras happened to be the first RSS leader to visit *Deekshabhoomi* the place in Nagpur where Dr. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism alongwith his followers in 1956.

Looking back, broadly one can say that RSS tried its hands in two different ways to deal with Phule-Ambedkar or defang the challenge posed by their ideas.

**i. Stigmatising Phule-Ambedkar, opposing reservation or resisting any struggle for Dalit assertion**

The book by Arun Shourie 'Worshipping False Gods' which tried to portray Ambedkar as pro-British politician could be said to be one such attempt of stigmatising Ambedkar. The book by a known Sangh apologist witnessed tremendous uproar in the Dalit movement for factual inaccuracies and misrepresentation of Ambedkar. A few students of Ambedkar also exposed the manner in which Shourie had tried to concoct facts to suit his thesis and also quoted the legendary leader out of context to buttress his point. It was during this period only when another Sangh activist Bal Gangal, wrote a series of articles castigating Mahatma Phule in a Hindutva centred weekly called 'Sobat'.

The late seventies or early eighties witnessed tremendous mobilisation on behalf of Dalits and other democratic forces on the issue of renaming the Marathwada University. A large body of people wanted that the name be changed to Ambedkar University to commemorate the work in the field of education undertaken by Dr. Ambedkar. The year 1978 witnessed anti-Dalit riots in Marathwada when the then Maharashtra assembly passed the bill with a thumping majority. The stamp of approval by the assembly led to anti-Dalit riots in the region which witnessed enough participation of RSS and other Hindutva activists.

The RSS network was fully active in the 1981 anti-reservation riots in Gujarat also. One could find maturing of Dalit-Muslim solidarity during this period where Muslims had sheltered Dalits at many places. The year 1985 proved to be a repeat of 1981 when Dalits faced the wrath of the same combine. It appears that the growing bonhomie between the Dalits and Muslims prompted serious rethinking in the Sangh Parivar itself over its own strategem and it was compelled to change its track. Within one year, i.e., in 1986 during Ahmedabad's annual Jagannath rath yatra, when riots flared up the Dalits were found enthusiastically supporting the RSS-BJP combine. During the riots all over Gujarat in 1990 in the aftermath of L.K. Advani's rath yatra, Dalits continued their alliance with caste Hindus. The BJP strategy of thus winning over Dalits and thereby consolidating broad sections of Hindus and polarizing the population along communal lines at least bore fruits in Gujarat.

**ii. Sanitising Phule-Ambedkar, supporting reservation including struggles for limited Dalit assertion but simultaneously constructing a new antagonism between the Dalits and the minorities.**

Sangh realised that instead of attacking Ambedkar it would be fruitful to construct his new image which would suit its own worldview.

A few affiliated organisations were floated to suit the purpose. The year 1979 saw the formation of *Sewa Bharati* supposedly to promote educational initiatives among Dalits at an all India level whereas *Samajik Samrasta Manch* (1983) was launched basically to target the Dalits and their movement in Maharashtra. Other affiliates of the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal or its political platform Jan Sangh/BJP were also asked to focus their attention on these 'deprived sections of Hindu community'.

To gain wider acceptability among Dalit masses, RSS even supported the inclusion of 'Riddles in Hinduism' in the government publications when there was a great uproar in Maharashtra over this spearheaded by Shiv Sena.

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The Shiv Sena people wanted that Ambedkar's booklet 'Riddles In Hinduism' should not be included in the Collected Works as it supposedly contained 'objectionable references about Ram and Krishna.'

The spatial strategies of Hindutva were skillfully employed to help generate new antagonisms between the two communities. And the target of attack had normally been the syncretic traditions of people where members of both the communities - especially belonging to the lower rungs of society - mingled easily.

### **SAMAJIK SAMARASTA :**

#### **NEW PRAXIS FOR COOPTATION OF DALITS**

The nearly 25 year old trajectory of *Samajik Samrasta Manch* could be loosely divided into two phases.

In the first phase the emphasis was not on asking Dalits to join the Manch rather it was on convincing the non-Dalits especially the upper castes that they need to moderate their stand vis-a-vis Ambedkar. The idea was to present Dr. Ambedkar as a Hindu Social Reformer and convince the caste populace that he should also be included in the Hindutva pantheon. Emphasis was on to remove the stigma that the RSS has been an anti-Dalit organisation. Of course, during this initial phase also Sangh tried to attract individual Dalit intellectuals towards its activities. In fact the readiness with which Dr. Gangadhar Pantawane, a leading Dalit intellectual and editor of 'Asmitadarsh' addressed one of the conferences organised by Manch (1988) created a big furore in the movement. The Manch as well as many other affiliated organisations of RSS started celebrating 14th April as well as 6th December at their own level.

To begin with, it would be worthwhile if one takes a look at a RSS activist's own description of the genesis of *Manch*. In his writeup in 'Vivek' weekly ' Ramesh Patange tells us

*It was the decade of 70s when the word 'Samrasta' was used as an idea in the theoretical field. And the credit should be given to Late Dattopant Thengdi. It*

*was a coincidence that the year 1983 saw the birth anniversaries of Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Hedgewar falling on the same date. This prompted him to launch a new Samajik Samrasta Manch in Pune with the understanding that it could be used a forum to further new ideas. Mr Thengdi gave a speech on this occasion which was later published as a booklet with the title 'Samarasta Bina Samata Asambhav' (Equality Impossible without Harmony).*

(quoted in 'Samrasta Ke Sutra, 2006)

In the present second phase when the Sangh Patriarchs felt that enough groundwork has been done to present a sanitised image of RSS, it went all out to attract even Dalit masses towards its activities. To propagate the message of Manch it brought out booklets, (e.g. Samrasta - Dr. Hedgewar, Dr. Ambedkar), held workshops, organised conferences, took out *Sandesh Yatras* throughout Maharashtra supposedly to propagate the ideas of reformers like Phule-Ambedkar. Interestingly it even organised exhibitions of Buddha's life when lakhs of people gather every year to commemorate the 1956 conversion to Buddhism. But one of the most daring steps taken by the Manch was the support it rendered to the publication of 'Riddles In Hinduism'. Taking advantage of the birth anniversaries of Hedgewar and Ambedkar (1990) the said Sandesh Yatras throughout Maharashtra were organised.

Commenting on the 'Samrasta' experiment, political scientist Suhas Palshikar explains that the RSS wanted to consolidate its image by upholding Ambedkar and at the same time did not wish to lay claim to the radical transformative legacy of Ambedkar. According to him Sangh accomplished this feat in the following manner :

- a. To begin with, the RSS conceded that Ambedkar was a national symbol and an icon of national stature (not just a leader of Dalits)...

- 
- b. Secondly, *Samrasata Manch* sought to project Ambedkar as being favourable to Hindu interests and Hindu unity...
  - c. Having once asserted that Ambedkar was interested in the welfare of Hinduism, the *Samrasata Manch* further sought to depict Ambedkar as religious reformer within Hinduism...
  - d. Having pushed Ambedkar into the Hindu reformist framework, the *Samrasata Manch* further strengthened Ambedkar's place as a Hinduist thinker by projecting that he was anti-Muslim...

It is for everyone to see that the appropriation of Dr. Ambedkar's radical legacy could not be resisted in any meaningful manner. The split within split in the Dalit movement and the confusions rampant in the Dalit intellectuals themselves created a situation that Sangh did achieve a limited success in its expansion.

#### **RECLAIMING THE REAL AMBEDKAR - REINVIGORATING THE MOVEMENT**

The saga of Hindutvaisation of a section of Dalits or the appropriation of one of the biggest leader of the oppressed does not end here.

It is a tragedy of epochal proportions that the section which has been at the receiving end of the Brahminical system for hundreds of years is today metamorphosing itself into the biggest defender of a project committed to building Hindu *Rashtra*

It is disturbing that a significant section of the Dalits (and the tribals) who would form the backbone of any revolutionary transformation in future seem to have crossed over to a camp which is engaged in furthering hate and peddling its exclusive agenda.

It is no less shocking that the man who fought all his life against the injustice structured in the Hindu religion and ultimately embraced another religion asking his followers to be ever vigilant about the use of Hindu gods in any form, is slowly being turned into a Hindu reformer and a Muslim baiter.

It is disturbing to note that an organisation

which opposed the assertion of Shudra-Atishudras and which is committed to such an exclusive agenda is today in a position to present itself in a 'new look image' couched in a liberal/sounding rhetoric.

For an external observer the absence of any significant theoretical-political challenge to the dangers posed by Hindutva may lead to the inference that the juggernaut of Hindutvaisation of the subalterns is unstoppable.

Nothing can be farther from the truth.

It is true that the internal dynamics of the Dalit movement coupled with the chronic weaknesses of the radical transformatory or other democratic movements, and an ascendant Sangh Parivar which has operationalised a multidimensional action plan to coopt the Dalits has definitely complicated things for all those forces who feel concerned about this new turn in the Dalit mindset. But with passage of time there is growing realisation in the ranks of the radicals within the Dalit movement as well as the progressive forces which are committed to a revolutionary transformation of society that they need to introspect their mistakes and forge long term solidarities to face the onslaught.

One is finding new commonalities of interest and purpose in all those formations/movements who are in one way or other opposed to Brahminism, Patriarchy and Capitalism and want to usher into a society which has done away with discriminations, deprivations based on these categories.

They have realised that they need to reclaim the real Ambedkar, a legendary who asked the workers to fight against the twin enemies of Brahminism and Capitalism, a visionary who prophesised that "If Hindu Raj does become a fact it will, no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country. No matter what the Hindus say, Hinduism is a menace to liberty, equality and fraternity. On that account it is incompatible with Democracy. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost" has never been so urgent.

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