

CHAPTER 7

ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Print, Electronic Media, Email, Rumours and Pamphlets

PUCL- Vadodara and Shanti Abhiyan monitored the local press in Vadodara throughout the period of violence starting 28th February 2002. The following report is based on our submission to the Editors' Guild on 5 April 2002, in which we analysed the role played by the vernacular (and English) press in representing the situation to its readership. Constraints of time, resources and people made it difficult for us to do a more detailed analysis of the role of the electronic media. We have, however, tried to put together some details of local news channel programmes in Vadodara.

In our 'framework' for analysis, we looked at the following issues:

- Headlines: were the headlines provocative or inflammatory?
- Photographs: where did they appear? what kinds of photographs were used?
- Language: was the language derogatory, offensive or biased?
- Sources: where did the paper get its information from? were interviews referred to or sources identified? Who were the people interviewed?
- Rumours: were the news reports substantiated?
- Editorials and analytical articles: what were the perspectives offered to the readers?
- Incorrect reporting: are there reports that we knew to be false?

THE GUJARATI PRESS

Sandesh (Baroda edition)

According to our framework, the Gujarati newspaper *Sandesh* crossed all limits of responsible journalism during the violence in the state. While it is difficult to give an exact translation of the articles and news reports that appeared in the newspaper we have selected a few reports and summarised them in the Annexure. Our fact-finding has made it possible for us to compare facts unearthed during our field visits with the news reports. The Annexure also contains brief analyses of individual articles.

Some characteristics of news articles, reports and editorials which appeared in *Sandesh*:

- *Sandesh* used headlines to provoke communalise and terrorise people. On 28th February 2002, the main headline said: 70 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* simply used his words as a headline. The Godhra attackers are consistently referred to as "Muslim *Junooni*".
- On 6th March 2002, the headlines screamed 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.
- On 8th March 2002 a news item had the headline WHEN MUSLIM LEADERS SHOUTED SLOGANS LIKE 'HINDUSTAN ZINDABAD'. The report goes on to say that the Circuit House witnessed 'an unprecedented event' when Muslim leaders of the city got together to shout slogans like the above, and appeal for peace. The implication is clear: that Muslims are inherently anti-national and violent.
- Most reports concerning the post-Godhra violence usually began with a preceding sentence eg. '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 was strikingly absent in reporting the subsequent genocide. This introductory statement reinforced a hierarchy in the two sets of crimes that were being committed, one that was consistently underlined by the VHP (as well as the Chief Minister Narendra Modi when he justified the genocide in Newtonian terms).
- There were several instances of misreporting, which were instrumental in fuelling rumours. For example, the incident in Machchipeeth reported on 16th March was completely misleading (see Annexure; also see Area Reports.) 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 license for it. Likewise, there were misleading reports about Tandalja which has a large Muslim population. It also housed the largest relief camp giving shelter to more than 5000 people from the city and nearby areas. *Sandesh's* reports on Tandalja were instrumental in fuelling rumours and spreading false information. 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, also Area Reports.)

- The most horrific acts of violence were repeatedly sensationalised with the use of a few devices. For example, large bold letters were used as banner headlines particularly when referring to gruesome acts like the burning alive of people. Photographs of burnt, mangled bodies were a common feature on the front page or the last page that usually carries local news (see Annexure). In the first week of violence in the state, colour photographs of scenes of the carnage were superimposed with a large red star carrying the latest figure of casualties. Photographs of *trishul*-wielding *karsevaks* were splashed across the front pages in the first week. Both kinds of photographs served to instil fear and terror and to provoke intense passions and mutual hostility between the two communities.
- On 11th March 2002, headlines declared '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 (14 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.
- *Sandesh* effectively circumvented the code of conduct that disallows naming of communities involved in the violent conflagrations. Scattered across the newspaper were 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).
- Throughout the violence, *Sandesh* cynically promoted the idea of Muslims being anti-national and pro-Pakistan. Areas in the city and State with a large population of Muslims were described as 'mini-Pakistans'. On 7th March a report claimed to have discovered Godhra's 'Karachi connection', an entire area in Karachi named Godhra. 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 went on to say that such 'pockets' were being created in the city and instructed the police to take note of the reportedly 'criminal' U.P.migrant labourers who live in this area. That residents of the *basti*, Roshannagar, were living in complete terror at the time, was a trivial detail *Sandesh* report preferred to ignore.
- Similarly, on 1st March 2002, a report claimed that the whole Sabarmati Express train would have been put to flames had it been on time and not delayed. The headline claimed: 'A mob of 7-8 thousand was waiting for the Sabarmati Express to arrive at Godhra.' The mob was, according to *Sandesh*, made up of 'religious fanatics'.

Conclusions

When Muslims were at fault names were taken, and perpetrators were clearly identified. When they were the victims of murderers, arsonists, looters, etc., attackers remained unnamed. No sources were quoted for headlines, even when they were simply lifted from speeches by VHP leaders. Headlines were also misleading, and often followed up by reports that did not substantiate, and even negated the headlines completely. Photographs were used which sensationalised events, and could incite communal anger, fear and terror among people. The anti-minority stand was obvious in the slant in news reporting. Editorials and news items were often written in a manner to justify implicitly and explicitly the carnage after the Godhra incident.

Through the worst phase of violence in the city, *Sandesh* consciously sought to project a communalised version of events, desensitising its readers to the enormous human tragedy and inflicting serious long-term damage to a society already fragmented along communal lines. It has been our experience that its Baroda readers, particularly Hindus, frequently quoted *Sandesh* reports to refute any arguments in favour of moderation and restoration of communal harmony. We found that people's own experiences in their neighbourhoods as well as

reports in the national media were often relied on less than *Sandesht's* reports. This is indicative of the influence that *Sandesht* was able to wield in the most savage phase of the violence and thereafter.

Gujarat Samachar (Vadodara Edition)

Gujarat Samachar, the other leading Gujarati paper, also played a role in heightening tensions over the most intense phase of violence. However, unlike *Sandesht*, it did not devote all its space to hawkish and inflammatory reportage in the first few weeks, and did carry reports highlighting communal harmony.

Reportage on the Godhra incident, in particular, was inflammatory and irresponsible.

- The main report on page 1, 28th February 2002, stated: '3-4 young girls have been kidnapped.' The source of information was not mentioned. On page 10, there was a report of the VHP leader Kaushik Patel saying that 10 girls had been kidnapped. The reporter had not cross-checked information either with the IGP or Railway Police. The report did not give names of any of the girls or any other details. One more report on page 2 gave details of an eyewitness Hetalben, when the train reached Baroda. She said, "Young girls from Amraiwadi travelling with us are lost."
- On 6th March the last page carried a report with the headline: THE PLAN WAS TO TORCH THE WHOLE TRAIN, NOT JUST ONE BOGEY. In yet another box item on the 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 was based on a conversation with some Railway Police Force *jawans*. The way these reports have been presented is instigative. The same day's top story on the last page was about how the situation was gradually returning to normalcy.
- On 7th March the last page carried a news item presented in a box claiming 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 the Sabarmati Express on the fateful day. On 6th March the headline of a report says, 'Torching of the train at Godhra was pre-planned. Kalota was tipped by a railway officer how to cut open the vacuum pipes". The source of information was not mentioned.
- Bilal Haji, the main accused in the Godhra massacre, was described as 'SUTRADHAR' even before the trial.

Reportage of the Situation in Vadodara

- Caption of a story on the last page, 7th March: 'What was the 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.'
- 8th March, p. 3: The report of the Chief Minister's visit to Vadodara carried the caption: 'Mysteries of the Godhra conspiracy are opening up slowly..' However, the story does not open up a single mystery.
- 16th March, p.8: 'Indiscriminate firing from Fatehganj Mosque'. A complete fabrication, see Area Reports.
- A report on 16th March described incidents in Machchipeeth as if only Muslims were culprits. The headline claimed 'private firing on *Rambhakt's*'. The report described the whole incident as a pre-planned attack. Nowhere is it mentioned that the *Ram Dhun* procession was taken out with police permission. The role played by the mob in the procession is not at all mentioned. (See Area Reports.)

Other Reports

- 18th March, p. 1: 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.'
- 21st March, p.10: '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.'

- 24th March, p.1: 'Sat kaival temple receives threat: Sarsa temple and *pathshala* threatened to be blown using remote control.'
- 24th March, p.2: 'Possibility of weapon attack. Secret agencies receive information; Religious and Educational institutions shall be targeted. All DSPs alerted.'
- 26th March, last page: 'Sabarmati Express incident was nothing but a pre-planned incident. Several youths would be ready to commit crimes on just one signal from Bilal'.

'Positive' Stories

- Muslims saved a Hindu shopkeeper's shop in Halol (2nd March, p.5).
- Residents of Ram-Rahim tekra in Ahmedabad is an example of communal harmony (5th March, p.1).
- Hindus saved life of a Muslim woman in Halol (5th March, p.5).
- No one wants riots. Rare scenes of communal harmony in sensitive areas of city (6th March, last page).
- Elol village near Himmatnagar is an example of communal harmony (6th March, p.5).
- A Muslim woman offered shelter to a Hindu family (7th march, p.3).
- At Bhoj village in Padra taluka, Muslims were given shelter in a temple. (7th March, p.8).
- "Oh! He is our Rahim *Chacha*...our *guruji*..and they saved him (10th March, p.11).Article by Bhaven Kachchi in Sunday supplement.
- At Lilapir Dargah of Talaja, devotees include all - Hindus and Muslims. (11th March, p.5).
- A Muslim old woman saved from mob by a Hindu youth.(22nd March, p.2).
- A pregnant lady sent to Hospital by a Muslim youth risking his life.(28-03).

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 most critically 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 28th 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 28th February.

1. Report on the Godhra Incident (28 February)

The paper reported that *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 focussed 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 do not know 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 provided important and useful information for its readers. Some of these were:

- Details of phone and fax numbers 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 carried detailed investigative reports of the violence. Some of these were:

- 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 Lakgel¹ for burning (8th 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 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 gave 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 Muslims saved Hindus, there is also a report on how looting of both Hindus and Muslims took place.

The 12th March issue carried 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 carried a report of how Muslim women saved the lives of Hindus. News of unity among Hindus and Muslims of Lambadia and Sami were reported in other issues of the paper.

5. Role of the Police

The paper 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 was 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 was 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 carried commentaries by prominent liberal intellectuals and humanists of Gujarat, such as an article by Mahesh Dave which fearlessly reprimanded 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 violence was worse than the '69 riots.

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, on the whole, managed to maintain a good balance in its reporting, and was fair and even-handed in its commentaries. This is significant since *Gujarat Today* is a Muslim-owned paper which is primarily read by Muslims. The paper was restrained in its reporting and its choice of visuals, temperate in its language and eschewed shrill and potentially provocative matter. Where rumours were mentioned, they were presented as such and not captioned with misleading headlines, as was done by some other newspapers. It regularly carried items highlighting interdependence of communities and incidents of help and co-operation extending across community barriers. It investigated incidents and carried detailed information that did not appear in other newspapers, thereby providing a useful service to its readers.

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

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 a youth-and-entertainment perspective has generally guided *Baroda Times*, it has also, over the past year, carried several reports on the local history of the city. *Vadodara Newslite*, on the other hand, is more local news-based.

Both papers, in our view, were 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 was the case with *Sandesh*; rather the term 'mob' was repeatedly used.

The choice of photographs in both papers was sober. Both desisted from showing dead/mutilated bodies, or close-ups of the injured. Photographs were generally of people in hospitals, areas under curfew, and of 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 referred to rumours, naming them as such, and not passing them off as facts. However, either paper did not adequately investigate sources of rumours and their effects on the prevailing situation in localities.

Editorials in both papers were 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 destroyed 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 IE's *Vadodara Newslines* should be commended for its coverage of incidents in the city, and TOI'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 was by and large satisfactory, there were some shortcomings; perhaps some of these could 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 were poorly covered, were combing operations by the police; police atrocities against women (most of which also occurred during combing operations); involvement of persons named by the people in various areas and importantly, the effects of the violence in different areas on Hindu residents.

IE did a fairly intensive coverage of the riots through investigative reports, analytical articles and editorials. Its headline of March 24 read "Dial M for Modi, Murder?". A daily tally of persons killed in the riots was displayed on the first page over the first two weeks of March 2002 which was titled 'Modimeter'. These had mixed reactions.

A BRIEF NOTE ON THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Cable TV Channels

Local political leaders used the local electronic media in the most despicable manner. The intentions of the following leaders belonging to the ruling party and their affiliates becomes very clear if one examines the speeches of these leaders on local TV channels (namely JTV, Deep and VNM). The speeches of the following leaders were particularly provocative and aimed to incite the crowd to violence: Ajay Dave, Nalin Bhatt, Deepak Kharchikar, Neeraj Jain, Bhartiben Vyas (Mayor of Baroda), Jitendra Sukhadia, and others. If these were the speeches on TV one can well imagine their role of these people during the violence at the grass-root level. (For example, on 18th March, Ms Bharti Vyas convened a 'Shanti Samiti' meeting that was attended by the Police Commissioner and the Collector, as well as leading political figures of various parties. She made appropriate pacifist remarks in this meeting and then on the same day she made inflammatory remarks against the minority community in the VMC council.)

On 14th March, a group of PUCL representatives told the Police Commissioner that local TV channels needed to be warned. We tried to obtain copies of the offensive tapes to submit to the NHRC, but were not given these. The Police Commissioner gave a notice to the local channels, whose telecasts were off the air for two days, after which they resumed their work with a vengeance. In the last week of March, owners of two TV channels, VNM and News Plus, were arrested, when in fact the other two channels, JTV and Deep were far more inflammatory. It is significant that when people were housebound in the first week of terror and violence, with curfew all over the city, local cable operators were airing aggressive nationalist films like 'Border', '16th December', 'Gadar', etc.

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

Table 7.1: Some Examples of Misuse of Cable TV Channels

Date	Name of Channel	Content
27 February 2002	VNM Channel	Ajay Dave's (VHP) statement that we will retaliate with violence and create history (in relation to Godhra incident)
From 27 February, for more than a week	JTV	Kept repeating images of the Godhra incident many times a day, thereby attempting to create feelings of outrage among Hindus.
15 March, 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.
15 March, 2002	Deep Channel	Showed rally after <i>shiladaan</i> . 3 local leaders Deepak Kharchikar (Shiv Sena), Niraj Jain (Bajrang Dal) and Ajay Dave (VHP) gave speeches and interviews at the Machchipeeth <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'.
16 March, 2002	VNM or News Plus In Cable	Ajay Joshi : 'We will be training Hindu youth to be <i>ladayak</i> (warriors, aggressive ???)'
29 March, 2002	VNM or News Cable	Mayor Bharti Vyas said 'like Hirankashap destroyed evil, we will also destroy <i>deshdrohis</i> '.

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.

- 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
- 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
- "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 VaishnoDevi, Amaranth and in almost allover 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 you are stand, but a vast majority is with you and love you. Pls 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)

- The very fact that anti-national elements were effectively paid back during hit tenure is reason enough for us to salute him" - Vishal Patel (A student in Ahmedabad)
- 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" - Shreenuvas Gadi
- "It's ploy to tarnish CM's image through 2nd phase of riots sponsorship" -
- 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.

RUMOURS

The long history of communal violence in India is replete with instances where rumours have formed part of a modus operandi of a very special kind. By instilling fear and suspicion they prepare the ground for mischief by interested elements and simultaneously ensure the agreement of large sections of the public in what appear to be acts of self-defense.

Essentially fictitious, rumours tend to capitalise effectively upon people's latent fears, phobias, and vulnerabilities, and are effective vehicles for misinformation. Combined with propaganda in the form of malicious pamphlets and inflammatory 'news reports' they help in sustaining and prolonging structures of oppression. Together they generate an atmosphere of fear and mistrust in which peace initiatives were hampered.

Rumours were in constant circulation in Vadodara city and around throughout the weeks of communal tension and violence. They palpably increased and reinforced prevailing levels of tension, fear, and insecurity. By combining fear and mistrust they lent immediacy and a concrete edge to popular hostilities towards the 'Other'. Rumours had their basis in mutual threat perceptions of each other which was partly based on the perception of State authorities not being able to maintain law and order. It also was a outlet for the neurotic energies accumulated which in better times could have been channelised constructively towards formation of *mohalla* committees and the like.

Documented below are the different types of rumours that circulated in and around Vadodara city.

1. Decapitated Bodies in a Temple

In early March 2002, soon after the first intense phase of violence, a rumour about four decapitated bodies that had been thrown into a temple, adjoining the Muslim-dominated suburb of Tandalja, spread rapidly. It did not last long, but its implications were clear.

Tandalja is one of the few suburbs to have come up somewhat recently with a predominant Muslim population, outside the walled city. It has a sprinkling of reasonably well to do Muslims living alongside common citizens. Owing to its primarily Muslim identification, the locality is often referred to as the 'border' or as 'mini-Pakistan' and figures in the so-called 'threat-perception' of a sizeable section of middle-class Hindus. However, in sharp contrast to such stereotypes, Tandalja stood as an example of peace through the long period of disturbances in the city - and despite several attempts by outside groups to incite violence. There were also constant rumours about an imminent Muslim backlash emanating from the locality. Certain neighbouring colonies, under the inspiration of the ruling BJP leaders, even initiated a move to have Tandalja declared a 'disturbed area'.

2. Temples under Attack

There were rumours about at least two temples that had been attacked by Muslims. One of these was the Swaminarayan temple near Taiwada, a Muslim locality. The other was the Jalaram temple in Karelibaugh. Both these rumours were false. *Sandesh*, the local newspaper, had carried this story.

3. Raja Masani Murder

There was a category of rumours which dealt with actual events but altered important details such as to produce contrary effects.

On 22nd March 2002, a Muslim teacher, who ran coaching classes in the Dandia Bazar area and was married to a Hindu woman, was lynched to death in his office by a group of masked men. In Sayajigunj, this news was constructed as the death of a Hindu who ran cooking classes. *Sandesh* reported that the victim was a debauch who ran coaching classes as a pretext to seduce young woman. On those very premises, the paper reported, the teacher had a bedroom where he used to sleep with women.

8. Avdhutnagar, Makarpura

In Avdhutnagar, Makarpura, during one of those moments when violence had abated somewhat, a group of Muslims were returning home to collect their belongings under police escort. An organised mob, a few hundred strong, brutally attacked them while the police stood by passively watching the crime unfold. Two people died on the spot and many were seriously injured and were hospitalised. The incident became the subject of a rumour but with essential facts altered. It reported that Hindus were assaulted heinously; as a result 22 of them were killed and many hospitalised.

The *Sandesh* of 3rd March carried a story about the abduction and rape of Hindu women when nothing of the kind had actually happened.

5. An Impending Muslim Attack

A widespread rumour, which also lasted the longest, talked about an impending retaliatory attack from Muslims. The expected timing of the attack was constantly deferred from Id to Holi and then to Shivratri, without the rumour losing credibility. This was despite the fact that it was Muslim lives, houses, and business establishments, which had been the relentless target of coordinated mob fury and destruction for weeks together. Or, perhaps, it was precisely because this was common knowledge that the rumour gained credence.

Two versions of the rumour circulated. The first spoke about a few truckloads of heavily armed Muslims, seen on the move somewhere in the city's vicinity, looking for an opportunity to launch an attack. The second version, which came into circulation later, referred to Muslims moving in a Tata-Sumo armed with AK47 assault rifles -- a weapon that by now is synonymous in public imagination with 'Islamic terrorism'. In character with rumours, it was not long before the single Tata-Sumo metamorphosed into four.

It is always difficult if not impossible to trace the exact or original source of a rumour. However, reports suggest that the Tata-Sumo rumour originated in Sama, spread by the BJP corporator of the area, Pradip Joshi. Reports from residents of colonies around the Abhilasha Char Rasta in Sama indicate that the police were instrumental in spreading this rumour. A police van went round informing people about the expected attack and instructing them to remain alert against it. This imparted greater authenticity to the rumour.

6. Rumours and Night Vigils

Rumours originating in such contexts had become the staple of almost every middle class residential colony, holding them in a vice-like grip. The stark evidence of a pulverized population huddled away in miserable 'relief camps' or in apprehensive, confused Muslim ghettos notwithstanding, Hindu neighbourhoods energetically turned to the task of organizing the defence of their own residential quarters. Committees came up quickly, enlisting defense squads consisting specially of able-bodied men of the colony. Armed with *dandas*, iron rods, hockey sticks, or any other household implement for that matter, the men kept nightlong vigils for weeks together. Gates were secured, at times even barricaded; in some places the boundary walls were raised higher. The vigils were punctuated with breaks for tea and snacks supplied by the women of the colony. Late night dinners for all members of a colony were not uncommon. Cards and carom boards helped to while away the long hours during which the men stood guard against the coming attack.

It may not be out of place here to note that between riots and rumours a new public space came to be etched, howsoever provisionally, where men and women (the latter largely segregated within the family in normal times) could socialise. Between them they also supplied the ballast for shoring up or even redefining community bonds and boundaries against an imaginary foe.

PAMPHLETS

Pamphlets and pamphleteering had a big role to play during the riots. A sample of this type of literature is summarised in the table below.

Table 7.2: Summary of Pamphlets Circulated

Brief Description	Comments
<i>Obituary/Announcement of 'Besna' of one of the Godhra victims</i>	This obituary seeks to make a martyr of one of the victims of the Godhra tragedy, reminding everyone of his sacrifice.
<i>Boycott of Muslims</i>	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.
<i>On the absurdity of the economic boycott</i>	A 2-page note pointing out that economic sleight of hand or criminal misconduct is not confined to any particular community.
<i>Rise! Awaken!</i>	Slogans of ' <i>Hindustan Zindabad</i> ' go along with slogans of ' <i>Jai Shri Ram</i> '. 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'.
<i>An R.S.S. highly confidential letter.</i>	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 Hindus 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.
<i>'Hindus and Sikhs Beware!' dated 13 April 2001</i>	An appeal to Muslim youth to volunteer to 'entice' heathen girls (' <i>kafirs</i> ').
<i>Historical decision regarding 'Quran'</i>	An order passed by a Metropolitan judge – A booklet including a judgement in a Delhi court, misquoting Vivekananda, the Quran, Shri Aurobindo and 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.
<i>'Jehad'</i>	An utterly profane piece critical of Muslims and valorising Narendra Modi for his 'great deeds'.
<i>Shaheed Hone wale Marhum Musalmanon ki Aaho Pukaar</i>	A self-critical piece attributing the present sorry state of Muslims to not living by true Islamic edicts, which include Muslim 'haves' not sharing their bit with 'have-nots' by not paying the correct <i>Zakaat</i> , not keeping fast as prescribed, not having a roving eye on women, etc.
<i>Na Sambhaloge to mit jaoge</i>	A piece of advice – 'God helps only those who help themselves' -- to Muslims of various denominations to unite, to boycott the poison-spreading <i>Sandesh</i> newspaper, and asking Muslims to take up self-defence and not bank on the government and the police.

<p><i>A letter written by Vimala Thakkar of Mt.Abu dated March 2, 2002</i></p>	<p>A 'friendly' communication that does not communicate. It touches on various issues, "the pre-planned 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 in the VHP project of building the temple." It ends by appealing for support to the Prime Minister of India's appeal for restraint.</p>
--	--

Annexure

Sandesh Headlines and Reports

28th February, 2002.

Page 1

1. 70 HINDUS BURNT ALIVE IN GODHRA.
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 is quotes the VHP leader from Dholka Rajendra Shah who says that the 'Hindu samaj will have sharp reactions to the killing of innocent ramsevaks. 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 Ramsevaks 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: The report says: 10-15 girls were dragged out of the Sabarmati Express, and 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* said that this report was false.

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

Pages 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 sensationalised, 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

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:

A MASJID AND 3 FACTORIES BURNT IN ANKLESHWAR

Page 5

STATION MASTER ALSO INVOLVED IN THE SENSATIONAL GODHRA MASSACRE.

Page 10

'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 15

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

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 no attempt to verify this, no sources have been quoted. This report was later denounced as false by *Gujarat Samachar*, another Gujarati daily.

Page 16

1. RELIGIOUS FANATICS STAGE ARMED ATTACK ON WAGHODIA ROAD.

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

2. 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 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

Photographs with caption: Bodies burnt in Mehsana.

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

Page 2

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

Analysis: 'Mob' is used here instead of 'religious fanatics', so presumably this is a Hindu mob.

Page 3

IT IS SAID THAT IN THE 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

A FRENZIED MOB WITH A FUNERAL 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

Photographs of bodies.

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

5th March 2002

Page 5

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

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

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 - Vadodara 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.

6 th March, 2002

Page 1

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

7 th March, 2002

Page 8

NOT JUST PEACE: RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE NECESSARY: THE GODHRA MASSACRE: PRE-PLANNED 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 is 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

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

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?

Analysis: What was the intention of the newspaper in splashing a photograph like this on the front page? The report goes on to say that it was a dog that had dragged the body of the calf into a street.

Page 7

1. 4 YOUTHS WITH RIFLES ESCAPED IN A 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.

Page 16

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 communal hostilities.

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

Page 14

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

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 has 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 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.

Page 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 *Ramdhun* 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 Machchipeeth area of the city.

2. Machchipeeth VIOLENCE LEADS TO A MOB LOOTING AND SETTING FIRE TO SHOPS NEAR NATRAJ CINEMA.

Analysis: The violence in Machchipeeth 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

RAMDHUN IN RAMESHWAR MANDIR. THOUSANDS OF DEVOTEES PARTICIPATE.

Analysis: Once more there is glorification of the *Ramdhun* 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

Boxed 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

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

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.

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

Page 16

HEADLINE: ANGRY MUSLIMS FIRE ON AND ATTACK RAMSHOBHA YATRA. What happened in Machchipeeth 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 Machchipeeth. 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 spirit. The police was also present. The shobha yatra reached the Machchipeeth crossing. Dhols and manjiras were played.

At Suryanarayan Baug an acid bulb shot out from a rooftop in Machchipeeth. The ram bhakts of the shobha yatra looked towards Machchipeeth 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 Machchipeeth. 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 Machchipeeth 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 Machchipeeth 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 Yusuf 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 Machchipeeth actually followed a very different sequence. Our separate report clarifies this in greater detail.

Page 16

1. WAS THE MACHCHYPEETH 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

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

Analysis 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 12

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

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 news report and photographs designed to sensationalise gruesome incidents of violence.

Page 3

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

Analysis: Muslims being portrayed as fanatics once again.

Page 5

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

Photographs of those injured and dead.

Page 11

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

SAI MANDIR AND THE HINDU AREA IN TULSIWADI 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: 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: News like this could have encouraged other such attempts to maintain peace but that was not on the *Sandesh* agenda.

Page 14

Photographs of weapons and broken temples.

21st March 2002

Page 7

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

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

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