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An Overview of the Role of Print and Electronic Media in Baroda During the Gujarat Carnage

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THE ROLE OF NEWSPAPERS DURING THE GUJARAT CARNAGE:

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

- *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 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 Macchipith 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 '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

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 'Hujji' 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 3,8-3-2)

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 Rambhaks'. The report goes onto 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. (Copy attached)

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 Ahemedabad 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,6-3-2).
Elol village near Himmatnagar is an example of communal harmony (p.5, 6-3-2).
A Muslim woman offered shelter to a Hindu family (P.3,7-3-2).
At Bhoj village in Padara taluka, Muslims were given shelter in a temple. (P.8,7-3-2).
"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).

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

- 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 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.

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 the 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 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 IE's *Vadodara Newsline* 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 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.

IE 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'.

***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 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

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 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 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 Karelbaug 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 mob attacked a religious place in Sakhera 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 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

1. 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'.

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Analysis: Why print such slogans in an already explosive situation? The

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

Analysis: There could have given a less inflammatory headline.

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 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.

3. '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.

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 Macchipith 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 Macchipith. 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 Macchipith crossing. Dhols and manjiras were played.

At Suryanarayan Baug an acid bulb shot out from a rooftop in Macchipith. The ram bhakts of the shobha yatra looked towards Macchipith 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 Macchipith. 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 Macchipith 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 Macchipith 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 yatra 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 Macchipith 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 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: Cross 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.

5 April, 2002

PUCL/ Shanti Abhiyan Baroda

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.

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|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Given below are some samples of the inflammatory stance of the channels. | | |
| Date Feb. 27, 2002 | Name of Channel VNM Channel | Content 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 shila daan. 3 local |
| | | leaders Deepak Kharchikar (Shiv Sena), Niraj Jain (Bajrang Dal), Ajay Dave (VHP) gave speeches and interviews at the Machhipeth naka. 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> '. |

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
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 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)
4. 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)

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

PUCL/Shanti Abhiyan, Baroda

4-Apr-02

Summary of Pamphlets Being Circulated

| | |
|---|--|
| Obituary/Announcement of 'Besna' of one of the Godhra victims Boycott of Muslims | This obituary seeks to make a martyr of one of the victims of the Godhra tragedy, reminding everyone of his sacrifice 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 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. |
| "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." |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Shaheed Hone wale Marhum Musalmanon ki Aaho Pukaar</p> | <p>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</p> |
| <p>Na Sambhaloge to mit jaoge</p> | <p>keeping fast as prescribed, not having a roving eye on women, etc. A piece of advice -- "God helps only those who help themselves" -- to Muslims of various denominations to unite, to boycott the poison-spreading Sandesh</p> |
| <p>A letter written by Vimala Thakar of Mt.Abu dated March 2, 2002</p> | <p>newspaper, and asking Muslims to take up self-defence and not bank on the Government and the Police. 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</p> |

Project of the VHP of building the temple." It ends by appealing to support the Prime Minister of India's appeal for restraint.

The National Curriculum Framework in Gujarat – Children's Education in a Hindu Rashtra

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The National Curriculum Framework (2000) has been widely criticised by educationists, historians and other scholars for its attempts to further the agenda of the Sangh Parivar through school education. Principally, the NCF lays down the foundational principles of the Parivar's vision of a 'national', 'Indianised' and 'spiritualised' education for children. In a significant departure from earlier frameworks (1975, following the 1968 Education Policy; and 1988, following the 1986 Education Policy) which stressed the inculcation of democratic values and social justice, and national integration as achievable through appreciation and understanding of the commonalities of different subcultures, the principal focus of the NCF is 'value education'. Value education forms the hub of the NCF, its main plank to launch the spiritual and moral renewal of India. It is through learning of the 'lives of prophets, saints and the sacred texts' (p.35) that children can achieve higher SQs (Spiritual Quotients) and EQs (Emotional Quotients) (p.13). Other problematic areas in the NCF are the focus on Sanskrit - spelt Samskrit in the NCF - 'a living phenomenon ...still relevant to the life and needs of the people of India' (p.54) and 'Vedic Mathematics', and its pernicious position on gender ('education of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family' - p.20). The implementation of the NCF was stayed by the Supreme Court on 1 March 2002 on the ground that the NCF had not sought the mandatory approval of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE).

For those who for various reasons view critiques of the NCF with scepticism (as also those who believe that since education is a concurrent subject, the NCF may be rejected at the state level), it must be reiterated that it forms a blueprint for education, which can be adapted by states where the BJP is in power and where they have managed to put other Sangh Parivar agendas in place. With a BJP government and penetration of Hindutva ideology in all spheres of life, saffronisation of education in Gujarat did not have to wait for the NCERT's Framework. Gujarat was one of the first states to request UGC funding for courses in Vedic Astrology (the Baroda Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda reportedly being one of the major grantees and all set to launch bachelor's and master's courses). On 26 January 2002, a year after the devastating earthquake in Gujarat, the Education Department issued a circular to schools to observe 'Dharti Puja', and enclosed a list of shlokas to propitiate the Mother Goddess. In keeping with its role as a vanguard state, Gujarat had revised its textbooks along the lines of the NCF even before its official announcement. In fact, going by the details set out in Communalism Combat, October 1999, the Gujarat social science textbooks may have even exceeded the expectations of Dr J S Rajput, Director, NCERT and his mentor, Prof MM Joshi.

By February 2002, suggestions for curriculum changes in keeping with NCF guidelines were submitted to the government. According to a report in the Times of India (22 March 2002, copy attached), the Gujarat Education Minister stated that a state-level 'campaign' is necessary for implementing the 'National Curriculum' by

June 2003, through seminars with principals and teachers. It is more than likely that the Vidya Bharati Educational Trust – the Sangh Parivar’s educational wing – will be entrusted with this task. (It may be instructive to remember that in 2001, Goa’s BJP chief minister Manohar Parrikar handed over 51 government primary schools in rural areas to them.) According to the guidelines, Sanskrit will be taught from Class 6 in all schools. The Sanskrit Bharati, an RSS organisation, has been entrusted with the task of developing the curriculum for Sanskrit. Readers on sacred texts and biographies of selected ‘nationalist’ figures are also being developed. A book on the Upanishads has been written by the husband of the Education Minister Anandiben Patel, and a biography of Shyamji Krishna Verma by a former editor of the RSS journal ‘Sadhna’.

In this planned saffronisation of education, emphasis on ‘value education’ derived from religion and ‘tradition’ (read orthodoxy) replaces that on social justice, tolerance and plurality (the slogan ‘unity in diversity’ is being given a quiet burial). This new thrust is of a piece with efforts in other spheres to manufacture a majoritarian view of society in which the cultural and political space for minorities will progressively shrink. What better place to begin than in school? Experience of the present carnage against Muslims in Gujarat begs the question whether a saffronised school curriculum will not provide a good setting in which intolerance and further injustices against minorities can be justified.

4 April, 2002

A Note on History Lessons in the Social Studies Textbooks of the Gujarat Textbook Board, Classes 5-7

The present note refers to the history lessons and content of the Social Studies (Samaj Vidya) textbooks brought out by the Gujarat Textbook Board. This note is prepared by Shishu Milap, an NGO that has been working on developing alternative social science textbooks that emphasise a learner-centred pedagogy.

The Gujarat Textbook Board books combine distinct sections titled, History, Geography and Civics, into one potpourri called Social Studies. And on the average have something like 38 chapters in each year. Chapters are generally didactic or information-laden. There is little thought given to making it exciting, relevant, or interesting.

Looking at history lessons specifically for the classes 5-7, we have the following observations:

- 1) Class 5 has 33 chapters. In Class 5 under the so-called Vedic Yug, legend and mythology is often conflated with history. The Class 5 textbook in fact starts with the Story of Apala, then goes on to Maitreyi and Yagnavalkya and then Nachiketa. Under the head of "The Age of Epics" the textbook continues with Ram-Bharat Milan (Chapter 4); Shri Rama: The Example of a True Kshatriya (Chapter 5); Vikarna; Karna and Kunti; Shri Krishna and Arjun: the teachings of the Gita, and Krishna-Sudama (Chapter 9). Thus nine out of 35 chapters, with the History section having 19 chapters in all, are devoted to a period that can hardly be called History.
- 2) Even if one assumed it were History, there could have been some reference or indication to the specific antiquity of the Vedas or the Mahabharata or the Ramayana. There is no such reference except in an overall one page commentary at the beginning of each period.
- 3) Most of these stories in these chapters, interesting in any another context, tend to take a moralistic tone wondering whether the purpose of the text is moral education from essentially Hindu (unless you equate Hindu with Indian) scriptures, or History as the majority community would like to envision it as.
- 4) Again even when there are chapters devoted to historical figures like the Buddha, Mahavir Swami, Ashoka, Kalidasa, Harshvardhan, Huen Sang, etc., the style of treatment is valorisation by treating the narratives as essentially a story. But a historical treatment, which shows some consciousness of historiography on the part of the writers, is absent. Probably the previous versions of the book were criticised for making it dry and therefore the story format has been adopted.
- 5) The same comment is applicable to treatment of historical figures in Class 6 which is devoted to the Medieval Age. – purportedly 8th century AD to 17-18th century AD. Out of the 21 chapters in Class 6 devoted to History (out of a total of 40 chapters, the number of chapters itself is a scandal – but we need not discuss that here), nine are devoted to Saints – all Hindu Saints with the

solitary exception of Kabir. The entire Mughal Period gets one chapter in which Akbar and Aurangzeb are squeezed into one (Chapter 13). Among "Muslim royalty related themes", there is Chapter 8 on Amir Khusro and Allauddin Khilji and Chapter 21 on The Third Battle of Panipat.

- 6) In the Class 7 textbook on Social Studies, again there are 21 chapters, out of a total of 38, devoted to History per se. All the chapters are devoted to the so-called Modern Age. There are separate chapters --- keeping with its motif of History as biographical narrative --on Bentinck and Rammohan Roy, Laxmibai, Phule Dayandan Saraswati, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Tilak, Gokhale, Gandhi's Advent, the Sardar and Nehru, Bose, Tagore but none on Ambedkar.
- 7) Are there chapters which underscore the theme of Hindu Muslim Unity or the Unity of All religions? There are none in Class 5. In Class 6, chapters on Siddhraj Jaisingh, Guru Nanak, Kabir and Ramanand, and Akbar, and to an extent Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh, drive this message. In Class 7, two chapters on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda do this to an extent. A curious chapter called "Aarzi Hakumat" on the Junagadh and Hyderabad episodes misses the opportunity. However amends are made in a chapter in Civics called "The National Spirit".
- 8) Are there chapters problematising the problems within Hindu socio-religious structures? Emperor Ashoka (Chapter 15, Class 5), the chapters on Rajendra Chola, Vijaynagar, Ramanand and Kabir, and Akbar in Class 6, and Bentinck and Rammohan Roy (Chapter 3, Class 7), Sahajanand Swami, Brahmo movement and Phule in (Chapter 6, The Reawakening, in Class 7) do this to a reasonable extent. There is again enumeration and some discussion of Casteism and Communalism in the chapter on "The National Spirit".

The overall outcome of these textbooks, especially if one factors in the Civics and Geography sections, is bad pedagogy that is unlikely to inculcate a spirit of historical inquiry in the students.