

Gandhian Constructive Activities in Gujarat: Some Reflections

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INTRODUCTION

This report narrates constructive activities that have been carried out and initiated by voluntary organisations and individuals who have claimed adherence for Gandhi and his professed ideas and methods with regard to social change. The description is an outcome of an on-going exploratory study that we have undertaken in the aftermath of horrific violence that rocked and shocked Gujarat in first half of the year 2002. The study was conceived due to apparent inefficacy of organisations and prominent figures that draw inspiration and motivation from Gandhi's life and teachings in not only made those horrendous events impossible to take place but even quelling them later on. On the other hand, the investigation is also an attempt to explore tenacity and potency of non-governmental organisations as a general category with regard to governance and formation of social consciousness and awareness with regard to set of values and norms of universal importance such as non-violence, peaceful co-existence, communal harmony et cetera and also their effective role as institutions of civil society in public life on the instances of social events such as 2002 violence that have critical impact. In other words, it also addresses issue of role of civil society organisations in the present context.

We intend to cover some 15 to 20 organisations of Gandhian leanings during the course of our study. Our aim is also to have interaction with prominent figures and activists who are actively involved in public life and known to be staunch followers of Gandhian ways and methods. Workshops and other academic as well as semi-academic events are planned to get proper and better understanding. As mentioned this is an on-going research and this document provides our observations from first phase of our investigation that cover one region of the Gujarat state, i.e. southern part. We have also delineated efforts of Gandhian organisations and figures during the ghastly events of 2002 and even afterwards when social fabric of Gujarat was torn apart and needed utmost attention to restore normalcy with regard to inter-communal relations. Mainly attention has been drawn towards how they persistently interacted with people through print media and action programmes urging and arguing with them on fundamental points such as inter-faith relations, meaning of secularism in Indian context, Syncretism et cetera. With regard to published materials we have primarily referred vernacular journals such as "Bhoomiputra", "Nirikshak" and "Naya Marg" as well as some other publications. It is improbable to delineate all the activities initiated and supported by Gandhians. Our endeavour is to make an attempt to mention some of the notice-worthy expressions against violence engineered by parochial thinking and design that have rift Gujarat society apart on communal line.

In the first part activities of the four Gandhian organisations that were covered under the study have been narrated along their social impacts. The second section is on Gandhians attempts in the wake of Gujarat 2002 to bridge the gulf between people of two communities and educate people at large on certain basic values, principles, concepts and philosophy that have been considered as hallmarks of Indian pluralism. As will be noticed primarily qualitative details and observations have been narrated. The final report though will include some quantitative information.

I. GANDHIAN ORGANISATIONS: STRIVING FOR CHANGE

Following are the brief sketches of the four organisations which have been covered under the study. All four of them are based in southern part of Gujarat, mainly conducting activities in predominantly tribal areas.

i. Gram Seva Samaj, (GSS) Vyara

Gram Seva Samaj, Vyara was established in 1957. Vyara is the Tauka headquarter of Suart District. During the freedom struggle Surat district was the hub for freedom activities. During this period workers of freedom movement who were staying with Mahatma Gandhi at Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, came to this area as a response to Gandhiji's plea to go to villages and work for real Swaraj. Gandhian workers namely Jugatram Dave, Narhari Parikh and Chunilal Bhatt came to Bardoli in 1922 and established Swaraj Ashram there. The attempt of social awakening through Gandhian idea started in Surat district. This brought radical changes in the social and political spheres of the district. In 1928, the famous Bardoli Satyagra led by Sardar Patel also brought social awareness amongst people of Surat district. The Gandhians' emphasis was on cleanliness and prohibition of non-vegetarian food and liquor. Besides, they had also given importance to 'Khadi' and education. The educated tribal leaders were attracted to this ideology. Gandhians with support of tribals and Patidars from Bardoli established number of Ashramshalas on Gandhian principles. During the period of 1922 to 1947 Ashramshalas spread considerably in this area. At the same time Gandhians also started working on issues like implementation of Land Tenancy Act, Debt-relief Act and Minimum Wages Act for Adivasi landless labourers. Establishing Forest Labour Co-operatives was also one of the major economic programme launched by Gandhians after independence. In post-independent India many Gandhians joined the government while the other group opted for constructive work as their mission. But, both the groups have common understanding regarding bringing social change keeping in focus conditions of weaker sections. The change has to be brought following Gandhian ideas and programmes. While establishing Ashramshalas Gandhian constructive workers did give emphasis to non-violence and peaceful co-existence and these ideas were incorporated in activities of Ashram Shalas (residential school).

Gram Seva Samaj, Vyara was also one amongst many Gandhian educational institutes established during this time. The aim of the Gram Seva Samaj (GSS) were i) to propagate basic education on line the of

Gandhian Ideas; ii) to work for all-round development of tribals of this area; iii) to prepare tribal workers ; iv) to put Gandhian philosophy in practice through these Ashram schools. In the last 45 years GSS has been able to establish 28 Ashramshalas in the taluka which cater the educational need of entire Vyara Taluka. Apart from education GSS does undertake various community extension services in the vicinity of their operational areas. These activities involved Khadi spinning, development of agriculture, health services to poor tribals, spread of organic farming, preparing people to adopt Gandhian values of non-violence and peaceful co-existence through various programmes. Working for ameliorating the conditions of poorest of the poor through economic activities by establishing multi purpose co-operative societies has also been one major programme. Activists of GSS in its initial phase worked hard for implementing land tenancy act which gave land occupancy rights to tribals.

Today 4945 tribals boys and girls are studying in these Ashram Schools. In last 45 years more than 12 thousand girls and boys got educated through these schools. As a result literacy rate has been increased significantly. The Ashram schools have 1 to 10 standard schooling. Apart from imparting formal education these schools do give basic education to the students. The basic education (Nai Talim Shikshan or Buniyadi Shikshan) comprises among other components mainly training for self-reliance, manual labour and self-manage kitchen where students cook themselves. Agriculture has been given high priority in the entire programme. The students directly participate in various agricultural operations for self-sufficiency and gain practical field experience. It is expected that part of their food requirement must be met from the school-farm. Everyday in the school assembly religious songs from different faiths are sung to inculcate respect for pluralism. After the prayer teachers give detail explanation on meaning of prayer, thereby conscious effort is being made to instil secular values among the students. All religious festivals are celebrated with equal importance. There has also been conscious effort of making students live harmoniously and peacefully, respecting and caring each other personality and ideas in the hostel life. Various committees comprises of students look after various aspects of campus life. Students start their day early in morning i.e. at 5 a.m. by assembling for prayer. Then they disperse in various committees for respective work such as sanitation, kitchen, gardening and agriculture. After hour of working students take their bath and food. From 10 to 5 p.m. they attend class rooms and after that go for evening prayer. The curriculum for classroom teachings is prepared in accordance with Gandhian thinking. Once in a week students visit nearby villages and undertake community extension work. During the natural or man made calamities students of these schools join in relief work and prepare themselves as the concern citizens. After the schooling student go for higher study in similar Gandhian wedded institutions. In Gujarat we have two Gandhian universities which give such training. Thus, a good number of trained Gandhian workers are prepared every year by these institutions. They are all working for social justice with peace in the remote areas of Gujarat.

ii. Vedchhi Pradesh Seva Samiti, (VPSS) Valod,

Vedachhi Pradesh Seva Samiti Valod, was established in the year 1952. As mentioned in the GSS note the activists of VPSS also got sensitized during the freedom struggle. The activists of this organization are more radical and they are all highly educated. After the Independence a group of five individuals came together and formed a JUGANTAR group. Akin to what we had in west Bengal during the radical period, they all were influenced by Gandhian ideas and started working for the upliftment of the poorer section of society. The main goal of the VPSS is to create a just and peaceful society by developmental work. Their activities involved Khadi making, running education institutions, propagating bio-gas plants, social forestry, alternative energy and appropriate technology. Besides these VPSS does impart training to grass-root workers for developmental activities tuned with Gandhian ideas. Their area of working is in and around Valod taluka of Surat district. In last 10 to 12 years some of the activists of VPSS concentrate their work in Dharampur taluka of Valsad district. Dharampur is a cent percent tribal taluka and one of the most backward talukas of Gujarat. Economic status of large majority of population is very poor due to lack of livelihood activities. In terms of various development parameters too status of Dharampur can be considered as very backward. Majority of people are migrating in search for livelihood options to nearby places such as Valsad, Vapi and even Surat. Activist couple of VPSS Mr. Bhikhubhai Vyas and Mrs. Kokilaben Vyas used to visit Dharampur during the eighties for establishing a carpet-centre. During their visit they had an opportunity to see the misery and poverty of people living in Dharampur very closely. Soon they realized that education, employment and basic infrastructure should be given high priority for any developmental work. Initially they started residential schools called Chatrashalas. These schools are not like formal schools but they provide shelter to students. Government schools are there in majority of villages but due to migration most of the children migrate with their parents and thereby are deprived of school-education. Chatra schools are not just hostels but non-formal schools. These schools have full-fledged teachers, who apart from teaching, are well-trained for community work. Chatrashalas is the centre for development activities for village people. There are six such Chatrashalas in Dharampur, which are located in the remotest part of the area. After the initial period the entire activity has been given a holistic shape. In last 17 years their activities have been extended to other spheres such as providing drinking water, building check-dams as well as improving agriculture. They have prepared 60 local youths to carry the development task ahead. At present their activities have been covering 100 villages, with a population of approximately 80,000 people. Since water is the main problem the VPSS team has focused on that aspect. They have found out that there are wells in the villages but they have dried out as they were not used and properly taken care of. Hence they have decided to recharge and renovate the wells. For renovating wells VPSS has set a pattern, whereby about 50 per cent share comes from labour of the beneficiaries. Entire planning and execution has been carried out by the local

village leadership. Coming back to Chatra schools about 750 students are staying in these schools. The yearly expenditure for running these is about 2,50,000 rupees.. VPSS has innovative method of collecting donation. Bhikhubhai has a very good rapport with Swedish organization called TUFF. The students of Swedish schools put one day labour for Chatra school students in their country and send that money. Apart from this some of the Mumbai based funding organizations are also supporting the activities. In the Chatra schools students get experience of vermin-compost, compost manure and raising of mango plant nurseries. They grow vegetables and spin charkha for a pair of their clothes. The students, teachers and the team of the local workers have managed to utilize local resources to great extent. It should be noticed that so far VPSS has reconstructed around 150 wells in the area. Around 230 check-dams have been built. One of the important programmes of the VPSS at Dharampur is to build soil-bunds because most of the water flows down or drains during the monsoon due to sloppy terrain and lack of mechanisms that store or preserve abundance of water. VPSS manages to reclaim 1500 hector of land till date. Beside this the local worker found out that without bullocks it is just impossible to cultivate land and a pair of bullocks will cost around 6 to 7 thousand rupees which is not affordable for the tribals. They come out with new innovation by providing male buffaloes to them as this animal is competent to cultivate land of Dharampur.

They came to know that in central Gujarat farmers do not use male buffaloes in agriculture and they are just sent either to slaughter-house or estrange them. They manage to contact central Gujarat farmers and get buffaloes at Dharampur free of cost. So far 500 male buffaloes have been distributed to farmers. Health is also on of the activity of VPSS.

The VPSS experiment at Dharampur is started by Gandhians but this particular project is different from other typical developmental NGOs. It differ on three grounds i) VPSS manages to develop local leadership and there has been maximum participation of beneficiaries in developmental work. One can notice a sense of we-ness or identification towards organisation amongst the villagers. ii) VPSS has consciously avoided government funds. iii) There has been continuous effort to give training to workers and beneficiaries on the line of peaceful social justice which has created great impact on creating peaceful society. VPSS also manages to make people aware about their due rights as citizens.

iii. Sarvodaya Parivar Trust, Pindval

Pindval is one of the remotest area of Dharampur Taluka. Surrounded the Pindval village there are 150 villages situated on hilly track of Satpura hill range. Development in this area is very slow. Most of the villages are still inaccessible to road and other basic infrastructural facilities. In 1968-69 some of the Sarvodaya workers came to Pindaval for providing services to the tribals on philanthropic ground. In those days Pindval and surrounded villages were completely cut off from the mainland. Tribals of this area were

living in miserable condition. People were not getting food for mere survival. Health was a major problem for tribals. There were untimely deaths of the people. Dr. Navneet Fozdar , a M.B.B.S. from Mumbai heard about this and came to Pindaval and started providing health services to the people. Soon after his arrival another three Sarvodaya workers joint with Naveetbhai and began working in the area. Apart from health they also realised that people did not have proper roof on their house. Houses roof were covered with grass and in monsoon water leaked in the house which created health problems. They decided to provide roof tiles to cover the roofs. They managed to get funds from Mumbai based funding agency and started distributing tiles to villagers. Today in all 150 villages surrounding Pindval all houses are covered with proper tiles on their roofs which has prevented water prone diseases. In last 25 years Trust has covered 26 thousand families in the Pindaval area and spent five corer rupees. Food insecurity was another major problem. Workers of trust took up the issue and started grain bank at Pindval where highly subsidies grains were distributed which help villagers to sustain themselves in adverse situation. Every year trust distributes grains worth rupees 25 lakhs to villagers. Besides these trust has also started manufacturing Khadi at Pindval. Villagers were motivated to take raw cotton for spinning which had generated income for people. Once people came to know about steady income they started coming to take raw cotton for spinning. After the spinning the trust had established weaving looms at Pindval. Traditionally tribals were not weavers hence trust has sent some 30 tribals youth for training. After proper training tribal youths started weaving the Khadi. Today around 30 tribal weavers get full employment and every year trust sells Khadi worth rupees 25 lakhs. Recently trust has floated the idea of “Kante te pahre” (those who weave will wear). Under this programme Trust is planning to give spinning charkha to the members who have shown their willingness to spin. After the spinning process is completed, Trust weaves the cloth and gives it to spinners. The idea behind this programme is to make people self-reliance for their cloths. This is indirect employment generation programme. It is interesting to note that Trust receives every year around 90 lakhs rupees for welfare of people. The donors are ordinary people, petty shop keeper and industrialists. Account is very transparent and from total income only 8 percent is spent behind administration.

Some six years back trust has expanded its activities to further remote areas. One dedicated woman called Sujata Shah has started developmental activities in the village Kharki and surrounding 15 villages. Sujata has done her M.Sc. in Physics and taught as teacher in higher secondary school. But soon she realized that teaching to well to do students was not her aim. Being a daughter of committed Gandhian and studied at Gandhian ashram school she wanted to go to the tribal villages and served them. Initially she started with VPSS activities in Dharampur and worked for seven years with them. While working with VPSS she found that Kharki and surrounding villages are very backward and children are not getting education because of migration and abject poverty. She also found out during her intervention as a social worker that villagers of this part are very enthusiastic and ready to work collectively. Sarvoday Parivar Trust has given her all

freedom to work in this area and develop her work as per the need of the villagers. Sujata has grabbed the opportunity given to her and has settled down in Kharki since 1997. Within seven years span she became the Bahen of the area. In the initial period she stayed with villagers but after one year some of the villagers have given her land near river to start chatrashala akin to VPSS. She started the shala in 1999. Today around 350 children are staying in the chatraschool. Two Muslim boys from Ahmedabad who lost their parents during 2002 communal riots are also staying in chatraschool and studying. As discussed in VPSS note chatraschool activities are similar to it. Important intervention of Sujata Shah is that she is not only concentrating on chatraschool but she is equally involved in village development programmes. With support of the people she managed to construct road, check-dam, soil bunds in the villages. In Kharki she activated villagers and with villagers own initiative and participation she has been able to bring drinking water to all houses. Earlier people have to walk for three kms to get water. Now all villagers get it in their house. Villagers are themselves managing entire water works and distribution. Again with the help of people she has managed to stop liquor making distilleries. Today entire village is free from alcoholism which has positive impact on people. People confidently say that our health and economic conditions have improved after giving up alcohol. Training to local youths, panchayat representatives and women of mahila mandal is continues task for her. In each training there is a session on non-violence, peace and justice.

Gandhi Vidyapith, Vedachhi

Gandhi Vidyapith, Vedchhi was established in the 1967 by renowned Gandhian Shri Jugatram Dave. As mention above he and other Gandhians had started ashramshalas and balwadis (Pre-school centres for children) in tribal areas of south Gujarat, providing education and training in accordance with Gandhian method, called nai talim. It soon was realised that institution for higher education was also needed in the area. Gandhi Vidyapith was formally inaugurated by the then President of India Dr. Zakir Hussain. Kakasaheb kalelkar was its first vice-chancellor.

The tribal students who have finished their studies till higher secondary in around 70 of Uttar Buniyadi Vidyalas of this region were admitted in Gandhi Vidyapith. From 1967 to 1980 course of Sociology had been offered to the students. Since 1980 this has been changed into three years course of bachelor in Rural Studies (B.R.S). The degree obtain after three years are recognised by Government of Gujarat and are considered at par with bachelor of Arts degree given by ant recognised university.

The major objective of B.R.S course is to prepare social worker who is committed to Gandhian ideas. It intends to make education life-oriented and socially beneficial. The students are imparted training for simple, self-dependent and self-controlled life of ashram. In the education curricula too emphasis has been laid on agriculture, animal husbandry and cloth-weaving skill. The approach is holistic. Every year

around 350 students are obtaining B.R.S. degree from the Vidyapith. These students then join mainly voluntary group activities. Some of them opt for teaching profession too. They are the messengers and torch-bears of Gandhian values and thoughts promulgating harmony, peace, compassion, justice and equality in the society.

All the four organisations have been carrying their activities in predominantly tribal areas where people's lives have become stagnant due to poverty and lack of opportunities. Not only they provide them opportunity to survive and sustain in adverse situation but give them some hope of progress. Often criticism has been made that these organisations obstruct possibility of social transformation as people are not made aware of system that exploit them. Though this comment does have validity the four organisations which we have studied are found to be conscious about their role. People are being made aware about the system and they are told to be self-dependent and assertive with regard to their rights. More importantly, they facilitates community life where people come together for motives and work that are beneficial to community and society at large. They foster harmony and peaceful co-existence.

II. GANDHIANS RESPONSE TO COMMUNAL HOLOCAUST

Renowned Gandhian thinker and writer Shri Narayan Desai has made a significant observation while attending a dialogue on "Communal Situation" at CSS, Surat (5-6 march 2004) that those who got perturbed over ghastly events such as 2002-Gujarat remained unaware on activities of hard core communal forces during normal period. If they kept their senses alert in that time violence such as 2002 would never happen. Citing his own example he further elaborated that he had seen time and again a display-board declaring a specific town as belonging to Hindu rashtra but never took cognizance of it as worrisome matter. He thus emphasised induction of component of communal harmony in the regular on-going package of programmes. His admission indicates his and some others Gandhians grave concern over present communal situation which is emanated from integration of component of communal harmony in Gandhi's thinking. However, a strong criticism has been made over attitude and role of many so called Gandhian figures and organisations during and after violence. Some of them tacitly supported pogrom of Muslims, it was alleged. They were also berated for allegedly closing down the Sabarmati Ashram during violence so that Muslims who were running away for saving their life from assault of violent Hindu brigade activists did not take shelter over there. We do not intend to go into this controversy. In stead, Gandhians pro-active endeavours to extinguish fire of communal holocaust have been highlighted, though with critical perspective.

Their endeavours can broadly be categorised in two types. The first and foremost task was to curb the violence and restore peace. Simultaneously it was equally necessary to repose trust and give support and courage to people, especially of minority community who were on receiving end and were aghast at the turn of events. The Gandhians were among the first to get active as soon as violence broke out and got out of control. It was also very much evident from reactions of Hindutvawadi organisations and the state Government that a major holocaust was looming large on people. Gandhians were in forefront among those who took peace initiatives all over the state. The following details indicate some of the efforts immediately initiated by Gandhians:

Octogenarian Gandhian Chunibhai Vaidya and other Gandhians met on 2 March in Gandhi Ashram, Ahmedabad as violence got intense. The following day a prayer meeting was held and a memorandum was prepared which was sent to the President of India, the prime Minister and the Chief Minister of the state.

A peace meeting was held on 5 March in Kocharab Ashram which was followed by peace march, and was led by renowned Gandhians Narayan Desai and Chunibhai Vaidya. This first peace procession in Ahmedabad took place in extremely tense and volatile situation as hard core Hindu fundamentalists had gone berserker, literally taking over domain of public life.

Gandhians were again on a forefront in another peace march in Ahmedabad that was carried out on 10 March and was led by leading kathakar Muraribapu. From then on series of prayer meetings and public fasts were held at numerous places in entire state where violent mob had been committing horrendous acts.

Vadodara too was badly hit by violence. Jagdish Shah, a known Gandhian of the city was a leading force in formation of a body called 'Vadodara Peace Initiative (VPI)' where a group of intellectuals, activists and other concerned persons got together. Members of VPI fearlessly moved in the violence affected Muslim areas and gave them courage and support. They also kept in constant touch with police and immediately informed them about unruly mob cited at any place.

The younger generation among Gandhians were not lagged behind. Sanjay and Tula who have founded organisation called "Vishwagram", carried out peace march in violence affected places of Mahesana district of north Gujarat. The march was joined by leading figures of that region. A week long march was concluded with a convention that was attended by religious figures such as Muraribapu, Bhanuvijayji maharaj, Abdul Quadir Naqvi and renowned writer Gunvant Shah.

Relief activities for the victims, mainly Muslims were also initiated on large scale by numerous organisations. Along with others Gandhians were involved in managing relief camps at many places. Ila Bhatt, Nayana Shah in Ahmedabad and Jagdish Shah in Vadodara were some of the leading names.

Concerned persons all over Gujarat were making appeals, pleading people not to be misguided by parochial and fundamentalist forces and requesting mobsters to stop mindless killings and looting. They were meeting various authorities and Government as well as semi-government bodies and independent groups visiting

violence affected areas apprising them on prevailing situation and pleading to take drastic measures in order to restore peace. Gandhians were prime movers in all these representations.

But the situation was getting bad to worse and parochial and wild fundamentalist mobsters were not heeding to any conciliatory or soothing voice. The efforts of Gandhians and other expressions of reasoning and tranquillity were up against organised divisive forces and hence were often submerged and silenced in raucous murdering noise. They nevertheless did not give up and kept on their torch of hope burning against all odds and did never dilute their endeavours.

The most distinguished outcome of Gujarat 2002 violence with regard to Gandhians has been their change of attitude in the matter of interventionist role on social and political issues. Earlier, most of them were concentrating on the constructive activities they have opted for, mainly related to education, agriculture, khadi and village industries. Violence of 2002, especially social agenda of fascist forces emitted through it, shocked and shattered them completely. Narayanbhai's words that we have mentioned in the beginning of this section, reflected their feelings and thinking on this issue. Some of them were severely critical in the self-evaluation as they could not play in positive role against the onslaught of divisive and destructive parochial forces. Though another group of Gandhians was not accepting a criticism over their apparent failure and vehemently argued about their efforts after violence broke out. However, all of them have realisation that they have to be on their guard all the time, especially during apparently normal time and prepare people against parochial and fascist forces who may strike again with their devilish design. They can see a need to have constant interaction with people over issues of communal harmony, pluralism, syncretism and peaceful co-existence. Similarly, existing stereotypes and misconceptions over each other faith should be removed.

So far as action programmes are concerned let us mentioned a few initiatives in which Gandhians took pro-active role.

- In August 2002 when Gujarat society was slowly limping back to normalcy and it was expected that state assembly election would soon be declared in order to reap benefits of communal carnage, Concerned citizens who were opposed to these forces hold peoples convention at Ahemedabad which was presided by renowned Gandhian Chunibhai Vaidya. The convention took notice of prevailing communal divide in Gujarat society and sae urgent need to restore harmony and freed the society from violence. It was also felt that communal and fascist forces must be defeated in coming assembly election and for that people should be made aware of evil design of these forces and vote on real issues. The convention then formed "Lok Sangharsh Samiti"(Committee for people

movement) and responsibility of co-ordinators were given to Chunibhai Vaidya, Indukumar Jani and Prakash Shah, all the three with leaning towards Gandhian methods. The Committee organised numerous people conventions all over the state and openly asked people not to vote communal forces. On one or two occasions unruly mobs belonging to Bajrang Dal and VHP made attempts to disrupt the meeting.

- The above committee has remained active even afterwards. They have been holding programme of 'Lok-Sunavani'(People's Voice). Leading figures related to judiciary, journalism and other fields of public life are invited to sit on Jury Panel. People from Under-privileged groups and oppressed sections as well as those who are victims and sufferers in natural calamity such as earth-quake or man-created holocaust such as communal violence voiced their plights and problems in front of this panel, which then is publicised. This should be considered as politically significant activity in the present context when issues and problems affecting depressed sections are not being addressed and resolved by the state.
- Some of the women Gandhian activists met on the eve of 8 March, 2003 and discussed prevailing situation. It was agreed upon that present situation was the result of lack of mutual trust and love as well as utter selfishness. It was realised that to bring peace such situation it was essential to enhance mutual friendship among people. They decided to launch "maitri-yatra" (Friendship March) which would go through entire state. Women from different groups; Tribals, Dalits, Muslims, Hindus, Christians and others took part in this march. Series of meetings took place during it and attended by thousands of people. In all 480 meetings were held in 150 villages of 13 districts through which this march passed. The message of peace and friendship among different communities were conveyed during this march.
- Narayanbhai Desai who has very recently written biography of Gandhiji, has begun a week long programme of 'Gandhi-Katha'(The story of Gandhi). Through the real life story of Gandhiji he is promulgating values such as peace, harmony, compassion which were endearing to the great man and dearth of the same set of values has resulted into Gujarat 2002.

Likewise action programmes delineated above Gandhians have concentrated on print media too in a profound manner. Here mention of the three Gujarati journals need to be made as they have been performing outstanding mission of preparing and creating alternative opinions of key issues ever since their inception. Out of the three 'Nirikshak' and 'Naya marg' are edited by two of the progressive and liberal intellectuals-activists, namely, Prakash Shah and Indukumar Jani, respectively. These two persons always take lead

when an issue concerning underprivileged groups comes up. They never hesitate to take stand. During 2002 violence too these two journals provided space to express critical view-points on Muslim bashing. 'Naya Marg' as always has been forthright in lambasting role of the BJP government and wicked design of Hindutvawadi forces. 'Nirikshk' on the other hand, along with criticising state and its allied organisations severely, also created a debate on the level of ideas such as meaning of secularism, Gujarati identity, nation et cetera. These journals have openly announced that post-Godhara violence was an anti-Muslim pogrom, carried out by Hindutwadi organisations in the connivance of the state. This required extra-ordinary courage in that milieu dominated by fascist forces. These two editors have profound inclination towards Gandhi's thoughts.

The third journal "Bhoomiputra" has been published by a group Gandhians, known as 'sarvodayawadi'. It too has published critical outlook on violence though with a modest tone in compare to the above two journals. But more significantly various issues of it carried series of articles that deliberated various philosophical concepts and ideas concerning communal problem in profound manner. Kantibhai Shah, a much respected Gandhian and thinker and who is in the editorial board since many years has been writing on this problem with a missionary zeal. In 2003-04 he wrote a series of 15 to 16 articles on concept of 'Hindutva', which later on is published in a book form. Kantibhai has challenged Sangh Pariwaar interpretation of this idea which he emphatically proved was divisive and is against the syncretic meaning derived by great Hindu figures such as Vivekananda and Ramkrishna and even Gandhiji. After that he has written two more series of articles emphasising mutuality of two faiths, Islam and Hinduism. 'Bhoomiputra' also published articles by Vinobaji during this period where he has gone deep into tenets of various faiths and announced that all faiths pronounce same human values and in that sense he believes in all the faiths (The titles of these articles were quite significant, such as 'Garvthi Hun em Kahun Chu ke Hun Musalman Chun', 'Garvthi Hun em Kahun Chu ke Hun Shikh Chun', 'Garvethi hun em Kahun Chu ke Hun Khirsti Chun', 'Garvthi Hun em Kahun Chu ke Hun Parsi Chun' and so on.(This series was also published in book form). "Bhoomiputra" has also been publishing articles stressing communal harmony written by known thinkers and leaders such as Jaiprakash Narayan, Dada Dharmadhikari and Vimla thakar to name a few. At present Kantibhai Shah is writing another series with a title, "Miyane Mahadevno Mel Padshe ja Padshe", meaning that Hindus and Muslims have to forge unity.

All in all, 2002 violence of Gujarat has made Gandhians extremely sensitive and alarmed over the menace of destructive design of communal forces to divide society on communal line to capture power. They were caught napping and felt guilty about loss of lives of innocent people. They are making earnest effort to clear the minds of people of both the communities by holding meetings, conventions and workshops. They have been utilising print media quite effectively. When very few are willing to stand up against parochial communal forces, these committed Gandhians have been making their presence felt.

III. STRATEGIES FOR DISSEMINATION

- Already two workshops had been organised. The first one at CSS, Surat was attended mainly by leading Gandhians of Gujarat and elsewhere. They deliberated freely and critically on what went wrong and where they had done mistakes. It was also admitted that all the liberal and progressive forces and those who committed to communal harmony and peaceful co-existence should united work tirelessly to maintain pluralism intact.
- The next workshop was held at Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad where along with Gandhians, a large group of students who are studying in Vidyapith took part. The students too realised gravity of the situation and their role in the present context. A point of including component of communal harmony and peaceful-coexistence was seriously deliberated. It was also accepted that students during course should be made to interact with the people more intensively to disseminate ideas of harmony, non-violence and peaceful co-existence.
- As we all have known the stereo-types and prejudices have got strengthened at school due to faulty prepared curricula of various subjects. A series of workshops of teachers should be organised to remedy this shortcoming.
- Gandhians have proved that print media can be effectively utilised to disseminate ideas and concepts that foster harmony and peace. It is found that numerous writings that serve this purpose are published in scattered way. They should be brought together in a book form which then can be disseminated.
- A noted Gandhian Mahendra Meghani has taken up initiative of reaching to educational and other institutions and read out small articles written by known and unknown writers promulgating universally accepted ideas and concepts. His initiative should be supported.