

# **Miraj – Sangli -Ichalkaranji Riots**

September 2009

**A Helpless Administration**

**and**

**Disregard For Human Rights**

**Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini's**

**Centre for the Human Rights' Studies and Awareness (CHRSA)**

17, Chanchal Smruti, G. D. Ambekar Marg, Wadala, Mumbai - 400 031

Tel. + 91 22 2413 6966, 2418 5502 Fax: 2415 6725

E-mail: [samparka@rmponweb.org](mailto:samparka@rmponweb.org) \* Website: <http://www.rmponweb.org>

**Committee Members**

- Shri. Ganesh Sovani, Advocate                      Advisor & Convener
- Shri Nitin Raut, Advocate                              Member
- Smt.Shaila Samant                                      Member
- Shri Ashish Chavan, Advocate                      Member
- Shri Milind Arolkar                                      Member

CHRSA: Centre For Human Rights' Studies and Awareness - A Forum of  
RMP

- **Objectives**

Creating an awareness about human rights in society at large  
Undertaking Research on Human Rights issues.

Designing and implementing of human rights education in the cross -  
section of the society, NGO's and social workers Conducting on the spot  
study projects concerning human rights.

- **Projects Undertaken**

Training Program for political and social activists at Sangli, Sangmeshwar  
and Mumbai in the year 2003.

Publication of the Fact-finding report of the Solapur Riots – October 2002  
X-rayed erupted at Solapur in 2002.

A study report about the human rights issues raised in riots of the  
Police–Muslim Miscreants Confrontation in Bhiwandi (Dist. Thane,  
Maharashtra, India), 2006.

Training programme in human rights in association with the GHRD held  
on April 29 - May 1, 2009, The Hague, Netherlands.

## **Miraj – Sangli - Ichalkaranji Riot**

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## **1. Preface**

Over the last decade, Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini has conducted several multi-dimensional programmes and projects relating to studies in human rights. Today, there is a sense of satisfaction in our minds as we present this exhaustive report about the riots taken place in September 2009 in the areas of Sangli-Miraj-Ichalkaranji. Nowadays, the entire debate on human rights has acquired adversarial undertones with the polarization of views in the intelligentsia at large, as to what is the correct interpretation of a human rights violation. As a natural corollary, therefore, pertinent questions loom large about the human rights of the layman in the society, members of the majority community and also that of the men in uniform whether from police, army or other security forces.

We, at the Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini's Centre for Human Rights Studies and Awareness (CHRSA) passionately believe that consensual deliberation and holistic approach is the answer to this problem rather than polarization and extreme posturing. It was with this approach a fact-finding committee was formed to study and prepare a report on the riots recently witnessed in Southern Maharashtra, parts of Miraj - Sangli-Ichalkaranji. The study mission was headed by Dr. Shantishri Pandit, Professor of Political Science, Pune University. This committee extensively toured areas affected by these riots, conducted interviews with several people and prepared an exhaustive report. This report is the product of a meticulous and an impartial study of the events that took place in the wake of these riots from the human rights violations perspective.

Our sincere thanks to the members of the fact-finding committee, as well as to all the well-wishers and associated activists in and around the Sangli-Miraj-Ichalkaranji for extending their unstinted cooperation and support for this project.

I am more than confident that the general public and also the academicians in the field of social studies would welcome this report.

**Dr. Vinay Sahastrabuddhe**

Director General

Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini

## 2. Background

'The Centre For Human Rights Studies & Awareness' (CHRSA) is an offshoot of the Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini working for the preservation and upholding of human rights. The principal objective of this forum is to build awareness about human rights in the public at large and its ancillary objectives include education, research and legal intervention pertaining to human rights. In the past, on numerous occasions, fact - finding missions have been sent to place like Solapur, which witnessed a communal frenzy during the *Navaratri* festival during October 2002 and also at the Bhiwandi town (60s Kms. to the North of Mumbai), where a confrontation had arisen between the Muslim rioters and the policemen in 2006.

Both of these committees have presented their reports after conducting an objective study of these events. It must be specially mentioned that the Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission had taken *sou - motu* cognizance of our report, which had detailed out the dreadful events of 2006 in Bhiwandi.

Blatant violation of human rights is synonymous with communal riot. It has been often found and experienced that furious mob become violent during these riots, which finally results into the disruption of law and order and eventually pave the ways for violation of human rights.

The first week of September 2009, witnessed riots at Miraj and the surrounding areas over the displaying of a portrait showing the slaying of Mogul King Afzal Khan that was put up on an arch.

The fact-finding committee of the CHRSA. To investigate and find out the genesis of these riots, on behalf of the CHRSA, a six member committee, split in two groups undertook visits to the areas affected by these riots in order to find out whether the human rights of the people in that area were respected, preserved and / or these were violated in the wake of riots. The distinguished members of this committee were the individuals who continue to be active in their respective fields such as, political science, human rights, law, social welfare, etc. This report contains observations, conclusions and also recommendations of

## **2.1 Objectives**

To understand the overall background of the riot affected areas of Miraj–Sangli-Ichalkaranji and its surrounding areas.

To interview all the key persons (administrative officers of the government, police, social-service organizations and political activists as well as the common man, both from Hindu and Muslim communities) in order to make an objective analysis of the entire course of events.

To conduct an exhaustive study and analysis of the state of human rights of the common man during the riot period by using the information gathered from the sequence of events.

To make concrete suggestions based on the findings arrived at and also to an objective analysis of how best such incidents could be handled in the future.

## **2.2 Members of the Fact-Finding Committee**

Dr. Shantishree Pandit, Pune

Adv. Ganesh Sovani, Bombay High Court

Adv. Nitin Raut, Bombay High Court

Adv. Ashish Chavan, Bombay High Court

Shri. Ravindra Sathe, Mumbai – Executive Director RMP

Shri. Milind Arolkar, Mumbai – Executive, Research and Documentation, RMP.

The detailed information of the members of the fact-finding committee is given in the Appendix – IV.



### 2.3 Study Duration

Between September 17 and 22, 2009

### 2.4 Places Visited

Miraj, Sangli, Ichalkaranji, Kolhapur and Jaisingpur

### 2.5 Background

Miraj is one of the important towns in Sangli district in the State of Maharashtra. It is located ten Kms from Sangli to the North and around 50 kilometers on the Eastern side of the Kolhapur city. It is also a centre of the Miraj Tehsil (*Taluka*). Miraj is also an important junction on the Pune - Bangalore railway route of the South-Central railway.

Miraj is also known as a big trading centre, especially for food grains, where wholesale trading of food grains takes place. Besides that, in the surrounding villages the betel leaves are also cultivated on massive scale. These leaves also are marketed in Miraj in huge quantities for dispatching them to Mumbai and Pune.

Muslims account nearly 40 % of total population of Miraj which is 200,000. This place is gifted with lots of historical and cultural legacies for many centuries. Famous singer Abdul Karim Khan and the prominent historian, Vasudeo Vishnushastri Khare who brought the history of *Grand Maratha Empire* of post - Panipat war to the light were hailing from Miraj.

Miraj has also a history of Hindu - Muslim amity for more than 700 years. Testimony of this historic fact is evident in an erection of Mira - Sahib *Durgah* constructed during the Bahamani Empire's regime. The Mira - Sahib *Durgah* is recognized as the town's local deity. Every year, a festival of *Urus*, (the village festival of *Durgah*) is celebrated with lot of enthusiasm and the honour of placing the first prestigious '*Galef*' is accorded to a Hindu family coming from the cobbler's community.

Similarly, a monastery of Venabai, Saint Ramadasa's disciple was also established during the reign of Muslim emperor Adil Shah at Brahmanpuri in this town and the *Ambabai* temple was also constructed during the reign of Raja Chatrapati Shivaji, where, every year a festival of music is organized during *Navratri* celebrations and people from the Muslim community attend it enthusiastically.

Miraj is also popular for being the capital city of Royal Patwardhan family – the *Sardars* of Maratha Empire and there are numerous instances noted in history, wherein Patwardhan family had benevolently donated to *Mir Sahib Durgah*.

## 2.6 Prologue

Miraj town has a festive legacy of publicly celebrating the Lord Ganesha festival. As of today, there are 35 Ganesha Mandals functional in this town. On the holy day of *Ananta - Chaturdashi*, Lord Ganapati's idol is immersed in the city tank and this procession is taken out with bubbling enthusiasm and zeal. As per the convention, this procession is greeted and welcomed on its way by constructing majestic arches, a new tradition, that began in 1978. The CHRSA committee was told that the presidents of more than a dozen groups of public Ganesha festivals are men belonging to the Muslim community.

Miraj has no history of communal riots. Barring a solitary instance of 1983, there has not been any subsequent incident at all, which could be called as communal riot. In 1992, when widespread communal riots took place all over the country in the wake of demolition of disputed structure of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh in 1992, much to the surprise of all, peace prevailed in Miraj, which was very heartening thing to note at that time.

It is on this back drop of communal harmony, it is sad and dismaying that a riot should spark off at Miraj and its neighbouring areas on account of displaying of slain Afzal Khan's portrait on the way of Lord Ganesha procession.

The custom and tradition of setting up a tableau depicting a historical event is not anew in the state of Maharashtra. Several such huge tableaus have been frequently set up on the eve of various public ceremonies across Maharashtra at the places like Nasik, Pune, Mumbai, etc. The grand Maratha emperor Shivaji popularly known as 'Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj' is the source of infinite inspiration not only for the Maharashtra state, but all over India. Slaying of treacherous Afzal Khan by Chatrapati Shivaji is an event having huge historical significance. Setting up a portrait depicting such a historical incident on an imposing welcome arch bears an inspirational value and some political elements in the society needlessly created a ruckus over displaying of such portrait, when nobody (even from the minority community) had ever objected to its setting up.

On 28<sup>th</sup> of August, 2009 the Shiv Sena, a Maharashtra - based regional political outfit had obtained an official permission and also a requisite 'No Objection' permission from the police authorities for setting up of such a welcome arch and while on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, at early morning, i.e. forty eight hours before the Lord Ganesha immersion was to begin, Shiv Sena had set up a magnificent tableau in the Laxmi Market area of Miraj depicting the slaying of Afzal Khan. No sooner, such a portrait was hung up, hordes of both Hindu and Muslim communities started gathering there to have a glimpse of it. Certain anti - social elements in the society intentionally started fanning up communal feelings amongst the

members of the Muslim community when large number of people from this community too, had started gathering at the portrait site out of sheer curiosity. It is true that the police and the civil administration decided to interfere after noticing the crowd. But their method of doing so, was both insensitive and brutal as well. On 31<sup>st</sup> August, a 'Code of Conduct of the assembly elections of the State of Maharashtra State' was promulgated and by sighting this technical reason, the police authorities immediately demanded the removal of the welcome arch, without bothering about the sensitivities of the majority community.

This unwarranted act of bullying by the police authorities sparked off a controversy, which was followed by the slogan shouting and waiving of green and saffron flags by the members of both the communities. In the midst of this melee, suddenly stone pelting began and when the police forcibly removed the said arch at around 5.00 PM, the atmosphere immediately turned violent. The very act of removing the arch generated a triumphant feeling amongst the Muslims, which was further fanned by the anti - social elements from that community. However, at the same time, a sense of dejection crept into Hindu community which felt badly hurt by the scant respect shown by the government of the day to their feelings. While the stone pelting was going on, few Muslim miscreants desecrated Lord Ganesha's idol and also attempted desecration of two other welcome arches put up by some other groups. At this juncture too, the policemen acted with undue haste and brutally lathi charged on the volunteers of Ganesha mandals and manifested scant respect for the human rights of the volunteers. As if to add insult to an injury, the police without taking the majority community into confidence, hastily and shoddily immersed the desecrated Lord Ganesh idols, in an attempt to town down the incident. When these incidents were

happening, an over-zealous Muslim youth climbed over an official police vehicle and danced atop by waiving of a green flag. Before climbing over the police vehicle, the same flag was lying on the ground, when a policeman present near the jeep lifted it and obediently and handed it over to a miscreant who was attempting to stand on the roof top of the police jeep. As the luck would have it, some unknown vigilant person, happened to noticed this happening and did a video shooting of the entire incident and the CDs of which were distributed all over the neighbouring areas. Needless to say that the contents of the CDs had obvious fall out in these areas. This flag incident was solely responsible for the provocation to take place. As a protest move, 144 number of Ganesh mandals in Miraj city decided not to carry out immersions of Ganesh idols on the holy day of *Ananta-Chaturdashi*. It was also resolved that no immersions would be carried out at all unless and until the anti social elements responsible for the desecration of the Ganesh idols were brought to justice and reinstallation of slain Afzal Khan portraits on the huge arches was allowed.

This ensued a confrontation between police administration and Hindu organizations coupled with Lord Ganesh celebration committees.

After failing to overcome the situation, the civic administration imposed a curfew from 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 onward and thereafter a ruthless abuse of power by the police forces became an order of the day in Miraj town.

## **2.7 The Police Forces' Position and abuse of Power.**

The city of Miraj has a legacy of Hindu-Muslim amity. But this legacy was tarnished due to these riots. Geographically speaking, the border of the

Karnataka state is located just right adjacent to the Miraj town. Two to three years ago Miraj was notoriously famous for the illegal businesses and activities. Smuggling of sandalwood, illegal prostitution of women, and the pot-gambling, as well as unlawful sale of country liquor were very much commonplace in Miraj town. However, some of the leading police officers brought put cap on all of these illegal activities and also brought about significant changes in over all law and order. These tough measures also helped to improve revenue collection of the Maharashtra State government in the process. In Miraj, it is a common practice to travel by sitting on the top of a State Transport bus and the number of such travelers is very high. But the police authorities caught such people napping by conducting surprise actions against such passengers for their blatant violation of the laws and charged heavy fines thus making a substantial contribution of the revenue collection of the State Transport Corporation. This revealed to the members of this fact-finding committee by the local police themselves. These stringent measures implemented by the police had resulted into an enhancing the image of the police

force in the masses, but at the same time, it must also be mentioned here that this deservingly hard earned reputation of the police was marred because of the harsh, callous and merciless treatment meted out by the same police force to the public in the wake of the riots.

It was noticed by the fact finding committee of CHRSA that the brutal and suppressive measures ruthlessly implemented by the police authorities mainly resulted in spreading up of the riots in the Miraj-Sangli-Echalkaranji and the surrounding areas. The committee strongly felt that the police authorities miserably failed to take a serious view of the explosive atmosphere that got developed after the removal of portrait of the assassination of Afzul Khan and while doing so, the police simply ignored the consequences of their action.

The plain truth is that a constructive communication between the general public and the civil administration is very essential during the riot, but during these riots, many people informed to the committee that they had repeatedly sensed total antipathy and anger seething and simmering in the minds of people against the police force.

Secondly and also most significantly, Mr. Hafizbhai Dhature, the local Member of Legislative Council from Miraj town had long ago informed in writing to the district administration vide his letter dated 22nd March, 2009 and while cautioning that the anti-social elements who were at receiving end after being caught in the illegal business and anti social activities and who were deprived of their clout in the Miraj town after the strict measures adopted by the police officers against them were planning to incite revenge by causing a riot under some pretext or the other and had also suggested to district administration to undertake immediate preventive measures. But even then the committee members could not come across any serious measure taken up by the district administration of his letter. Some people also informed the committee members that several black-marketers and their associate anti-social elements settled their scores during these riots.

It was on the evening of 2nd September, 2009 the police authorities removed the arches that were displayed the portrait of an assassination of Afzal Khan which had created deep resentment amongst the masses in the surrounding areas of Miraj. But thereafter, the police suppression and atrocities on common man continued unabated. Some prominent politicians like Chandrakant Patil, Suresh Khade, BJP's MLAs and Shiv Sena leaders like Bajarang Patil and Women's Front Chief Sunita More and BJP activists like Hanmant Pawar and Makarand Deshpande were arrested and some other persons were also detained.

Several innocent persons were arrested between 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2009. The curfew order was promulgated as the situation went out of control which caused lot of inconvenience to the masses. The insensitivity about the human rights harboured by the police was primarily responsible for deteriorating the situation. Schedule II bears several instances which shows poor handling of the situation, both by the police and district administration.

Several news items that glaringly indicated how the police and the civil administration have miserably failed to establish immediate control over the situation after the riots began, which is reflected in Appendix – 2.



### 3 Miraj-Sangli: Points highlighting poor handling of riots.

Following significant issues analyze the overall situation and the examples of events supporting each of them are as detailed below:

- a) **The process implemented for pursuing a positive communication between the police authorities, civil administration, constitutional representatives of the people and the general public was inadequately low. An atmosphere for positive communication, adoption of the policy of mutual understanding, sensitiveness and respect towards each other and attitude for compromise was never generated.**

\* Committee felt that the people were having a feeling that for no justifiable reason the curfew was imposed and the people are still clueless as to what necessitated the authorities to impose curfew orders.

- 3.1 Highhanded removal of portrait depicting the assassination of Afzal Khan by the police and civil administration was primarily responsible for the people having felt hurt. Had the authorities allowed the display of smaller versions of assassination pictures, during the procession, then the delayed procession could have been easily curtailed. This proposal was mooted by some Hindu organizations and politicians before the administration, which came to be disregarded.
- 3.2 It was imperative for the administration to honour the people's wishes regarding the Lord Ganesha's immersion. However, some of the Lord Ganesh idols were immersed with total disregard to the religious conventions, which further fuelled public outrage.

- b) Lethargic approach of the police machinery, unwarranted fear about the possible reaction from the minority community and huge insensitivity towards the feelings of the majority community, lack of vision, feeling of being non accountable and an utter disrespect towards the people's representatives and politicians:**

After the riots started, the district administration banned the visits of political leaders who were to come to Miraj from Mumbai or else

where, under the guise of 'Code of Conduct'. It also did not consult the people's representatives, which actually angered many such leaders who expressed their complete dismay while interacting with the committee members.

- c) The stubborn and careless attitude of the administration, an overall absence of any cohesion whatsoever between the police force and the civil administration.**

Curfew order came into force in Sangli on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2009. Before the District Collector could officially pronounce the curfew, the police started imposing the curfew orders. Many media men got entrapped in District Collector's office throughout the day.

There was no unanimity between the police and district administration over the issuances of the passes to the activists of Ganesh Mandals in order to facilitate the immersion of Lord Ganesh idols. Even as civil administration had put up a cap of ten passes to each of such Mandal, but in effect, actually the police authorities issued many more than ten passes in the process.

- d) **An attitude of not taking social and political leaders into confidence resulting into lack of faith amongst the people, reluctance of police to share information with public:**

According to the members of Ganesh Utsav Committees, the administration and police did not clarify its decision about the immersion of those Ganesha idols which could not be immersed on the holy day of *Ananta - Chaturdashi* marked for the purpose, which created an utter confusion in the masses.

#### **4 Violation of Human Rights: Incidents in Ichalkaranji.**

The echoes of the happenings at Miraj - Sangli were immediately heard at Ichalkaranji. People in Ichalkaranji came to know about daylight spoiling of the Ganesha idols by the hooligans at Miraj, with the rioters shamelessly dancing atop police vehicle, passive posture adopted by the police instead of taking a stern action against the miscreants, which also went global through the medium of internet. Before the impact of these events in Sangli – Miraj could be felt anywhere, the police machinery in Ichalkaranji started behaving in high handed manner. Common man was greatly disturbed due to these pictures. To condemn the incidents at Sangli – Miraj, the BJP & Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena and other organizations had sought a permission to observe a day long fast in Janata Chowk on 5th September, 2009. However, the permission was refused to them. These organizations had assured full cooperation to the authorities for prevailing the law and order. Then on the following day, the police authorities summoned the leader of Vishwa-Hindu Parishad, Bal Maharaj along with Jawahar Chabada, Bandopant Musale of Shiv Sena and Ajit Patil to the police station and detained them till 10 A.M. on the following day. In this context, when Mr. Suresh Halwankar, the corporator and the group leader of BJP went to the police station to enquire about the detention of these leaders, he was informed that it had been carried out as per the directives received from the higher authorities in Mumbai and that they would be released only after such directives were issued from Mumbai. The strike was called out in Ichalkaranji to condemn this stern action of the police. This call received massive response from the people right from Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 and not a single untoward incident occurred during this strike. In the midst of all these fiery events, the Hindu organizations reiterated their assurance to cooperate with the police

and administration in order to maintain peace in the town with all their strength during their meeting of 'Peace Keeping Committee' with the local administration. In fact, the situation in the Ichalkaranji town had remained substantially under control even before the said meeting took place. But the flawed actions taken by the police ignited further blaze of the anti -social elements spreading the terror among the people at Ichalkaranji. The police authorities promulgated the curfew at Ichalkaranji on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2009 at 5.40 P.M. which was lifted on 13th September, 2009.

## **5 Plight of the innocent People crushed by the rein of police dictatorship**

The main objective of the police authorities behind imposing a curfew order was to restore the peace and reign law & order. But it is the firm opinion of the general public in Ichalkaranji that the overall behaviour of the police machinery during the curfew hours was full of cruelty and heinous, which is a curse on the humanity itself. Following are the ghastly events that fully describe how the police indulged into an unprecedented violation of human rights, notwithstanding of the fact that it is their priority was to protect these rights at any cost.

- 5.1 The house of Mr. Suresh Halwankar (Group Leader, Bharatiya Janata Party, Municipal Corporation of Ichalkaranji), who had spontaneously taken the lead in re-establishing the peace and communal harmony in Ichalkaranji, was unexpectedly raided by senior police officers along with a huge constabulary platoon of 150 policemen. These policemen brutally invaded his residence and went on to inflict inhuman beating on him along with his family members. Moreover, Mr. Halwankar and his minor children were arrested under the charges of several criminal offences (under Section 302, 139 etc. of the Indian Penal Code). As per the information disclosed by Mr. Halwankar before this study committee, he was detained in the Shivaji Nagar Police Station and was treated in heinous manner, which was worst than even a criminal might have experienced. After getting released on bail on 11th September, 2009, the local police authorities once again arrested Mr. Suresh Halwankar and when he asked the reasons his second arrest he was shamelessly told by the police that they have given a commitment to that effect to the Muslim community. The study committee received the information that while passing a judgment on Mr. Halwankar's bail

application when Hon. Justice of the Court questioned as to why the policemen who charged Mr. Halwankar under the offence of 'Attempt of Murder' (Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code) were not present in the court, the police authorities present in the court answered that those policemen were busy on the patrolling duty. The Hon. Justice promptly granted him a bail while passing a stinging remark that if the accused indeed made an attempt to murder those policemen, then the latter should have been hospitalized by now rather than being fit to attend the patrolling duty. Mr. Suresh Halwankar was debarred from entering the *Taluka* (the Tehsil jurisdiction) till 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009.

5.2 A young man called (Late) Mr. Umesh Mahadev Dange (aged 29, resident of Swami Farm, Jawahar Nagar, Ichalkaranji) was accused of participating in the riots was heinously beaten up by the police. On 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 Umesh Dange was sitting at his home while the curfew order was in force outside. His residence is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the building. At about 8 PM a team of few policemen entered his home and started thrashing him brutally right in the presence of his wife and minor children and his neighbors. The policemen stopped beating him and left his residence only when they themselves were exhausted and tired of beating him. Before settling their score with him in this inhuman fashion, policemen had probably ascertained well in advance that their victim would remain deprived of the medical aid since the curfew order is already imposed in the town. The unfortunate Umesh Dange continued to endure the injuries for two days thereafter without any medical aid

on account of the stringent curfew orders imposed outside. Finally, on 10<sup>th</sup> September at 5 am he could be admitted in a private hospital called 'Niramay Hospital' only after the curfew orders were lifted but he passed away in the same hospital at around 10:15 am. His post-mortem was conducted at 6:00 PM and a committee of five

expert doctors was appointed for that purpose. Sections of some of his internal organs have been sent to the laboratories in Pune to assess the true cause of his death (as per the information received on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009) and even then the police authorities are attempting to suppress that the real cause of his death, which is actually the inhuman and brutal beatings inflicted upon him by the police. The police authorities are trying to portray a false picture by claiming that he died on account of cardiac arrest. Moreover, the relatives of Late Umesh Dange alleged that the police carried out the funeral of the unfortunate victim without performing any of the religious rites and without showing any mercy to their pleas to participate in it.

- 5.3 The noble task of providing essential and life saving services were carried out by the volunteers of the '*Jeevan Mukti Sevaa Sansthaa*' – the Life Salvation Service Organization. This institution provides commendable services when it comes to natural calamities and emergency situations. The volunteers and activists of this organization have earned a remarkable reputation in the minds of the citizens of Ichalkaranji due to their earnest and selfless social service offered by them over the years. Even this time too, this organization rushed to the needy and provided many emergency services during the curfew hours clamped in the town. But this institution and its activists which actually contribute indirectly to the tasks that the police and the civil administration are required to do during the curfew hours received the brunt of the men having pervert attitudes present in the police force. At one point of time, a police officer called Narendrakumar Jadhav brutally thrashed the volunteers of this organization while they were going to help the needy and also tried to tear the official license given to them for travelling even while the curfew orders are imposed.



5.4 Mr. Rajendra Shinde, the ex-Mayor of the Ichalkaranji town and also the activist of Shivsena demanded to Mr. Phoolsingh Chavan, the police inspector present on duty to register a complaint of a brutal murder of Mr. Vasant Avaghade committed by the Muslim rioters since he was an eye-witness of the dreaded crime. But the aforesaid police officer refused to register such a complaint. Mr. Rajendra Shinde then quickly informed Mr. S.P. Yadav, the Superintendent of Police about this. Mr. S.P. Yadav took an immediate cognizance of this crime and arrested the accused and also congratulated Mr. Rajendra Shinde for his alertness. But, three days after these sequence of events taking place, (on Wednesday dated 9<sup>th</sup> September), policemen called Mr. Rajendra Shinde out of his home and brutally thrashed him in the *Limbu Chowk*. When his young son rushed to thwart the policemen and save his father from such inhuman beating up by the police, some of the policemen pointed the gun and threatened him to kill on the spot. As if all this was insufficient, the police then forcibly carried Mr. Rajendra Shinde to the Kabnoor village and he was again beaten-up there and arrested him with a grave charge of attempting a murder (Under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code). After being beaten up in such a dastardly manner, Mr. Rajendra Shinde was detained in the police station for more than 24 hours without providing him with any food and water or even without any primary medical aid even though he was reduced to being almost unconscious. He was admitted to the Indira Gandhi Hospital only after learning that his health has deteriorated where the doctors stunningly discovered that the policemen had not even left a single spot on his body free for the doctors to inject him. Even though he was in a dire need of medical aid, the policemen released him after conducting sundry medical remedies. The Hon.

Court promptly granted him the bail upon seeing his pathetic state of health and thereafter he obtained all further medical aid fully at his own expenses by getting admitted in a private hospital at Kolhapur. His family members and children are living their life under the dreaded shadow of fear even today.

- 5.5 Even the journalists and media personnel were not spared from the brutalities inflicted by the police force. Mr. Avinash Patil, a senior journalist and reporter of the newspaper '*The Human Rights News*', was severely beaten up by the policemen during the brief hours of the curfew order being lifted up. Mr. Patil was going to buy milk for a son of his friend who was unwell. He was also in possession of the license to freely move around even during the curfew hours. But policemen did not even offer an hearing to any of his excuses and went on to the shameless extent of saying, 'It will not be tolerated that you will consume milk at home and we should strive to establish law and order' and thrashed him without bothering about his age or even the status of being a dignified journalist.
- 5.6 The office bearer of Shivsena, Mr. Malkari Lawate too was lifted ruthlessly from his home and was arrested under the charge of participating in the riots for no reasons whatsoever.
- 5.7 The people in Ichalkaranji alleged/accused in front of the committee that the members of 'Friends of Police', an organization founded under the leadership of the local police administration participated to thrash the people on a large scale during the curfew hours and spread immense terror in the society. Basically, it is indeed an unlawful act to establish such an organization and offering unlimited privileges and powers to them.

## 6 OBSERVATIONS

- 6.1 The custom of erecting huge arches for the purpose of welcoming the Lord Ganesha immersion processions is in practice right since 1978.
- 6.2 With the exception of a riot in 1983, Miraj town has never witnessed any communal conflict. On the contrary, the Miraj town is widely famous for maintaining communal and social harmony. On this background, a surprise is being expressed from all parts of society over the happening of a major riot after the controversy over erecting the welcome arches.
- 6.3 Some of the Congress party activists, upon the condition of anonymity, have disclosed to this committee that this riot sparked off in Miraj, can be an act carried out with a pre-conceived plan by the district level leadership of the Rashtrawadi Congress Party.
- 6.4 The Muslim community had never staged any opposition to the portrait displaying the assassination of Afzal Khan. On the contrary, some of the members of the Muslim community asserted before this committee that since Afzal Khan was not related to them in any manner, there was no question of Muslims making an opposition to setting up the concerned portrait of his assassination.

Similarly, one of the police officer informed to the committee that not a single complaint was found to have been registered officially expressing opposition toward the display of such a portrait in any of the police stations.

- 6.5 The MLA of Miraj, Mr. Hafij Dhatture informed to the committee that one such portrait of Afzal Khan's assassination is permanently on display in the Aashtaa town of Waalvaa tehsil in the Sangli district and nobody has taken any objection to it so far.
- 6.6 On the 28<sup>th</sup> August, 2009 an official permission to erect a welcome arch was sanctioned. But on 2nd September the local administration issued verbal directives under the pretext of the upcoming assembly election's code of conduct to remove the Afzal Khan assassination portrait after noticing the same.
- 6.7 The portrait displaying the glorious event of Chatrapati Shivaji Raje committing the assassination of Afzal Khan was erected on the welcome arch by a political party i.e. Shiv Sena. The welcome arch so erected was displaying the name of Shiv Sena. Therefore a request was made to the local civic administration that the name of Shiv Sena be covered by spreading a piece of cloth over it and likewise keep that portrait on display which would have complied with the provisions of the assembly election's code of conduct as well. The concerned political party and all the affiliated organizations to it had offered their consent to this proposal. But even the police and civic administration adopted a recalcitrant attitude on this and disallowed the portrait being put up. It was told to this committee that if the administration authorities were not to be so much obstinate and grant their consent for this arbitration, the whole subsequent sequence of gory events could have been avoided.
- 6.8 The committee believes that the curfew was imposed in both at Miraj and Sangli and also at Ichalkaranji after the situation subsequent of the riots went out of control. But its duration was

unduly long, causing tremendous inconvenience to the general public and innocent citizens causing complete violation of human rights as their freer movements were unreasonably restricted for unwarranted prolonged time.

The people in these towns at large enormously suffered as the markets and places of trade throughout all the surrounding areas remained closed due to the curfew causing lack of supplies of food grains and all other essential services. Even the medical services were badly affected by the riots.

- 6.9 There is a widespread unrest in the minds of people at large because they are of the opinion that scores of innocent citizens were arrested by the autocratic rule of the police.
- 6.10 Another reason why the minds of majority community was blazing with unrest is that the police took almost eight days to investigate and arrest the rioters and hooligans who spoiled the Lord Ganesha idols and also attempted to harm the welcome arch constructed; but on the contrary whereas police were prompt and extra - ordinarily alert to arrest the people of the majority community.
- 6.11 Several of the arrested accused was kept behind bars without even providing food or water for more than twenty-four hours. Similarly, it was discovered that they were illegally detained in that state for more than 24 hours without complying with the rule of medical test of the arrestees. This too is a glaring example of the blatant violation of human rights. Two boys from Sangli (rural), named Milind Patange (age 21) and Aakash Patange (age 17) suffered like this.

- 6.12 On 5th September, one, Mr. Suhas Lokre (Kumbhar Khind, Sangli-Rural) was watching programs on T.V. at his home on 2nd floor when police entered in his house and brutally thrashed him though he was not related with the riot in any manner. The study committee learned this from his family members.
- 6.13 The committee has discovered that the relatives of the arrested persons were denied sufficient information about their near and dear ones when they went to the police stations to seek such details.
- 6.14 People from both the communities in Ichalkaranji town are completely confused about the reasons why police attempted to create a tense atmosphere there when an iota of communal tension was not prevailing there. This developed lack of confidence in the minds of the people about role of the police as 'the protectors of law' in the minds of people in Ichalkaranji.
- 6.15 A massive drive to arrest innocent youths and citizens belonging to both, Hindu and Muslim communities was conducted after imposition of the curfew. Moreover, several offences were registered against such arrested people. But the overall proportion of Hindus arrested in this manner is as high as 60% compared to the number of Muslims so arrested. This too has caused a widespread unrest in the minds of Hindus there.
- 6.16 The public in Ichalkaranji alleged that the members of 'Friends of Police' organization founded under the leadership of the local police administration participated on a large scale while thrashing the people in conjunction with police during the curfew hours, which caused an immense terror in society.

- 6.17 A platoon of police raided few houses of people of Dalit community in Sathe Wadi, caused wide spread destruction and severe damage to the houses and properties and the police even did not hesitate to use foul language and thrashed some women over there. At the time of the raid, the police force did not use female police staff and the females like Vimala Dhugade, Gauribai Bhore, and Yashoda Lokhande got the taste of the police brutality.
- 6.18 The three distributors & preachers of Marathi daily newspaper *Sanaatan Prabhaat* were forcibly arrested by Police and they were charged under Sections 143, 147, 149, 188, 338, 427 and 435 of the Indian Penal Code. What is utterly serious is that these distributors had introduced themselves and disclosed to the police their task of distribution of the newspaper in that area during the curfew hours. Even then, the aforesaid action was taken against them after they entered the Miraj town. In addition to this, they were implicated in a false offence of discovering harmful weapons in their vehicles and were charged under serious sections of the Indian Arms Act.
- 6.19 The police authorities ordered the arrested Hindu men to get two Muslims who would stand out as their sureties and *vice versa* for securing the release after the grant of bail. The Hon. Sessions Court at Miraj has squashed these orders since those were completely illegal.
- 6.20 Many arrested activists who are actively associated in the social and political sphere were unnecessarily barred from entering certain tehsils or districts. Names of some of these activists are as follows : Abhijit Mallikarjun Harane, Omkar Rajaram Shukla, Arvind Gopal Lohar (Dixit), Deepak Sadashiv Waghmare, Ameya B.

Sahastrabuddhe, Sanjay C. Sungare, Raju Shreepati Mali, Gajanan Hari Wayachadh, Amit Virupaksha Sus, Sachin K. Bakarne – all are the residents of Miraj.

- 6.21 On 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009, policemen virtually bulldozed into the house of Late Mr. Umesh Mahadev Dange (aged 29) and battered him in a brutal manner in presence of his small children as a result of which he ultimately died. But the police authorities portrayed a false picture of him succumbing to death on account of a cardiac failure. Besides, the relatives of the victim have alleged that the policemen hastily carried out the victim's funeral without performing the necessary religious rituals or without giving an appropriate hearing to their pleas.
- 6.22 In the Ichalkaranji town policemen thrashed the activists of the 'Jeevan Mukti Sevaa Sansthaa' – the Life Salvation Service Organization, who were permitted to distribute the products of day-to-day use and provide the essential services to the people during the curfew hours and the committee was also told that the policemen attempted to tear off the licenses provided to these activists which had allowed them to travel in the town during the curfew hours.
- 6.23 Mr. Rajendra Shinde, the ex-Mayor of the Ichalkaranji town claimed to be the eye-witness of the gruesome murder of Late Mr. Vasant Avaghade and demanded the police authorities to register a complaint against the Muslim hooligans for their role in this sensational crime. But the concerned Police Inspector not only refused to register any such complaint for three days after this ghastly act. But on the contrary, severely hit Mr. Shinde and also arrested him under the charges of serious criminal offences.



6.24 Mr. Suresh Halwankar, (group leader, Bharatiya Janata Party, Ichalkaranji Municipal Corporation), testified in front of the committee members that the senior police officers forcefully entered his house along with a platoon of 150 policemen and whipped him off and his family members severely and arrested him as well as his minor children under the charges of serious criminal offences despite the fact that he had taken an active role and lead to re-establish peace and harmony in the Ichalkaranji town.

**6.25** One of the elected representatives of the people told the committee about how the police adopt double standards while dealing with Muslim and Hindu communities and thereby cause a widespread unrest in the minds of the Hindu community. For example, *Urus* processions of the Muslim community have neither the time nor the sound restrictions and their processions continue to run till late in the midnight with deafening sound of Dolby sound systems. Whereas it is only the Hindu processions that are restricted both in terms of time and sound.

### **6.26 Conclusions**

6.27 Both, the police authorities and the civil administration miserably failed to handle the rioting acts in three vibrant towns in the Western Maharashtra of India.

6.28 There was a total absence of positive communication and coordination between the police machinery and the civil administration throughout the riot period.

6.29 The internal politics and rivalry prevailing between the police machinery and the civil administration added further fuel to deteriorate the overall situation.

- 6.30 In Miraj and Sangli 'Committee for Preserving Social Harmony and Peace' has already been set up. But it was discovered by this fact-finding committee that this committee members do not meet at all and conduct a regular discussions.
- 6.31 There was no administrative machinery in place to adequately convey the information about imposition of curfew and its duration to the people which caused many innocent people being caught unaware of it and they were forced to unnecessarily to bear the *lathi* charge. The death of an innocent man, Prof. Appa Bhisure due to the beatings of police is a glaring example of its kind.
- 6.32 The episode of setting up the portrait of the assassination of Afzal Khan vividly displayed the lack of courage in the police and civil administration. It is apparent that police and the civil administration indulged into a ruthless acts and merciless beating even though there was no official complaint registered by the Muslim people against any for displaying the portrait and there was no reason at all for the police or civil administration to keep aside their wisdom and succumb unnecessarily to pressure of hurting the sentiments of the Muslim community even as no such happening was noticed even at once. This clearly shows that police authorities have acted unilaterally by sacrificing their firmness policy, thoughtful action, and attitude to act only after discussing the issues with the respectable leadership of the people or society.

## 7 Recommendations

- 7.1 Several examples of human rights violations of the citizens, especially during the curfew hours, have been noticed during the recently occurred riots at the Miraj-Sangli-Ichalkaranji towns. Special measures and precautionary course of action needs to be adopted so that the basic human rights of the innocent citizens and the layman are protected in future if such a situation develops again in the future.
- 7.2 It is extremely necessary that a permanent system for educating the policemen and for enhancing their sensitiveness about the 'Human Rights' must be in place. For this purpose, the Hon. Director General of the State Police should form an action group at the earliest.
- 7.3 During these riots, almost 500 innocent and non- criminal citizens were arrested. It is necessary that a thorough investigation and fact - finding about the charges of criminal offences registered against them and the innocent people should be released and the concerned erring policemen should be brought to justice.
- 7.4 The Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission must take a serious note of the dreadful and gruesome human rights violations that have happened during these riots and should order an immediate enquiry into these incidents considering their severity and social implications. The Maharashtra State Human Right Commission is hereby appealed to initiate further legal action in case of late Umesh Dange, the cause of his the brutal beating that was inflicted upon him by the police of Ichalkaranji.

- 7.5 An appropriate methodology should be developed to foster a suitable channel of communication, co-ordination and balance between the police force and the civil administration during the stressful riot times.
- 7.6 The committees set up for maintaining social harmony and peace should be reorganized in such a way that all the elements from the society gets representation in it and special efforts should be made to arrange their meetings regularly.
- 7.7 The police authorities themselves have told the committee that, both, at the time of imposing curfew orders, as well as on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2009 when a hordes of people thronged, the technical faults had surfaced in the loud speaker machinery of the police force. The curfew has immense impact on the day to day life of the citizens. For the sake of the proclamation of curfew and informing the common people, the police stations should be well equipped with the communication machinery which is properly working. The committee recommends that the loud speaker machinery of the police be well-maintained, as well as other means for the proclamation like local news papers, websites, SMS, local FM Radio and Cable TV can be used in the days to come.
- 7.8 The civil administration should take a prime cognizance of the widespread feeling among Hindu people that they are being accorded the secondary treatment. The efforts should to be made to assure the majority community that their pleas are also heard and they are given the equal treatment as the minority community is given.

- 7.9 There is widespread unrest, dissatisfaction and agony in the minds of the people at large about the police force and also the civil administration. It is necessary for the police and civil administration to re-establish a dialogue by seeking a positive communication with people by going back to them in order to regain their faith in them.

## 8 Appendixes

### 8.1 The Sequence of Events in the Riots at Miraj-Sangli-Ichalkaranji

21 <sup>st</sup> August 2009	:	Beginning of the holy ceremony of erecting the 'Welcome Arch' with a majestic display of a portrait of the assassination of Afzulkhan by offering 101 coconuts.
2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2009	:	The gathering of fundamentalist Muslims taking an objection to the construction of the aforesaid 'Welcome Arch' since 11:00 AM in the morning.
	:	The Hindu protagonists are invited for a round of discussion at the police station
	:	Desecration caused to the welcome arch constructed by the Hindu Unity Agitation and the spoiling of the Lord Ganesha idol of the Maharana Pratap Chouwkh public group of Ganesha festival by the Muslim hooligans and rioters.
	:	Police force begins an unprecedented and fierce lathi-charge on the Hindu people and several Hindu leaders are detained under house arrest.
	:	At 5:15 PM in the evening the Police authorities forcibly removed the huge portrait of the assassination of Afzulkhan from the welcome arch set up.

	:	Police inflict a brutal lathi-charge over the members of Hindu community gathered to decide the course of Lord Ganesha idols immersion.
3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2009	:	The Hindu protagonists make an appeal for a mass strike and organize a cavalcade of vehicles for making the appeal.
	:	Arrests of Hindu protagonists after 12 in the midnight in Miraj.
	:	Mr. Parshuram Uparkar, the Member of Legislative Assembly of Shivsena personally pays a visit to the site and attempts to plead for the Hindu sentiments.
	:	The journalists are ill-treated and humiliated by Mr. Ashok Dhivre, the Special Inspector General of Police. The journalists condemn this promptly.
	:	Policemen begin merciless beatings of the innocent Hindu youth and women by invading their homes.
	:	Civil Administration insists for carrying out the Lord Ganesha immersion processions even late at night.
	:	Vehicles are burnt on the road to Mhaisal, women are severely lathi-charged and one youth is stabbed by a sword.
4 <sup>th</sup> September 2009	:	Furious women conduct agitation in front of the Datta Mangal Karyalaya (The Datta Holy Functions Auditorium).

	:	An unlimited fasting agitation of Mr. Suresh Khade and Mr. Chandrakantdada Patil, the Members of Legislative Assembly of the Bhartiya Janata Party followed by the massive rally of the Hindu people.
	:	Police inflict an insensitive lathi-charge on the rally of Hindu people so organized.
	:	The Corporator Mr. Makrand Deshpande, the Sangli City President of Bharatiya Janata Party - Mr. Hanmantrao Pawar, the Head of Women's Cell - Mrs. Sunita More, the District Head of Shivsena - Mr. Bajrang Patil are arrested along with the above mentioned two Members of Legislative Assembly.
	:	The holy Guru Bal Maharaj stages a fasting agitation in Ichalkaranji and an appeal for the strike in Ichalkaranji is made.
	:	Stone pelting on the shops in the Miraj, Tasgaon, and Kavathe-Mahakal towns.
	:	The meeting convened by Mr. Parshuram Uparkar, the Member of Legislative Assembly of Shivsena with the District Collector for the purpose of resolving the issue of Lord Ganesha immersion turns futile.



5 <sup>th</sup> September 2009	:	Mr. Suresh Khade and Mr. Chandrakantdada Patil, the Members of Legislative Assembly of the Bhartiya Janata Party are admitted in the Sangli Civil Hospital but both of them continue with their fasting agitation even there.
	:	Stone pelting in the Gawali lane and on the police force in the Ganapati Temple Chowk in the Sangli town.
	:	Personal request made by Mr. Jayant Patil, the Hon. Home Minister of Maharashtra State to commence the Lord Ganesha idols' immersion gets resolutely refused by groups of the Ganesha festival by declaring their firm resolve to erect the 'Welcome Arch'.
	:	A stone gets hurled toward Mr. Jayant Patil, the Hon. Home Minister of Maharashtra State, after he comes out of the meeting in Miraj but fortunately it did not hit him.
	:	Mr. Jayant Patil, the Hon. Home Minister of Maharashtra State, offers his personal assurance of an inter-departmental disciplinary action against Mr. Ashok Ghivare, the Special Inspector General of Police and Mr. Amol Tambe, the Deputy Superintendent of Police after making the necessary enquiries.
	:	The passengers attempting to travel suffer since the State Transport buses are not plying, Stone pelting at ten State Transport buses.

6 <sup>th</sup> September 2009	:	The three volunteers distributing the daily newspaper 'Sanaatan Prabhaat' are arrested and implicated under the false charges of carrying harmful weapons. Also the suppression of the daily newspaper 'Sanaatan Prabhaat'.
	:	Curfew order is promulgated in Sangli and Miraj.
	:	The appeal for 'Mass Strike' in Kolhapur city receives 100% response.
	:	The Holy Guru Bal Maharaj is arrested at Ichalkaranji followed by a 'Mass Strike' in Ichalkaranji.
	:	Mr. Prakash Shendage and Mr. Madhu Chavan, the Members of Legislative Assembly of the Bharatiya Janata Party detained in house arrest on the Kolhapur City Airport and they are sent back to Mumbai by the same airplane through which they had arrived in Kolhapur.
	:	Bail is sanctioned to both the arrested Members of Legislative Assembly and they continue with their fast right in the hospital itself.
	:	Police authorities begin their dictatorial regime to forcibly carry out the immersion of the Lord Ganesha idols.
	:	Prof. P.A. Bisure meets a fatal death after the shock of lathi-charge inflicted upon him by the police.

	:	A departmental enquiry of Mr. Ashok Dhivre, the Special Inspector General of Police and Mr. Amol Tambe, the Deputy Superintendent of Police begins
	:	Violence in Ichalkaranji followed by the murder of a Hindu youth.
	:	Unlimited curfew order imposed at Ichalkaranji, Shoot at Sight orders declared, riots take place at Satara town also.
7 <sup>th</sup> September 2009	:	3 days police custody accorded to the distributors of daily newspaper 'Sanaatan Prabhaat'.
	:	Police authorities forcibly prevent Mr. Gopinath Munde, the prominent leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), right in Mumbai itself from attempting to visit the Miraj town followed by a merciless lathi-charge on the BJP activists.
	:	Mr. Diwakar Raote, Mr. Parshuram Uparkar, and Dr. Nilam Gorhe, the Shivsena Members of Legislative Assembly are taken into custody by the police followed by Mr. Nitin Raut, the Minister for State of the Home Department sent back from the airport to Mumbai.
	:	Firing takes place at Manerajuri in the Sangli district – two injured.

	:	Policemen trap a jeep vehicle bearing no number plate on it and the four men hailing from the State of Madhya Pradesh travelling in it are arrested. Searching of the jeep results into a recovery of stamps with the names 'News-E-Islam'.
	:	Police authorities allow only 8 individuals to participate in the funeral procession of Hon. Bhausahab Padasalgikar, the distinguished and Senior Chess player who meets a natural death at Sangli. His fans condemn the decision.
	:	The district collector orders to register offences against the public groups of Lord Ganesha festival that are opposing the immersion of their Ganesha idols.
8 <sup>th</sup> September 2009	:	All-party meeting conducted in Mumbai under the leadership of Hon. Chief Minister takes the decisions of withdrawing the offences registered against the innocent people and the public Lord Ganesha festival groups to carry out the idols' immersions immediately.
	:	Curfew order is proclaimed in the Hatkanangale town in the Kolhapur district.
	:	The soldiers of the Para-military forces are deployed.
	:	Tension spreads across all the villages in the whole district including at Kavathepiran.

	:	Mass strike proclaimed in the Nargaon and Malgaon villages in the Miraj taluka (tehsil)
	:	An undeclared mass strike in Kolhapur and an atmosphere of tension.
	:	Majority of the schools and colleges across the Kolhapur district remain closed.
	:	Events of destruction of the religious places reported from Kodoli, Nanibai Chikhali, and Waranage villages.
	:	Destruction attempted by burning the shop in Kodoli and Sawarde villages.
	:	A huge Hindu prayer ceremony organized at the Kagal town followed by a total collapse of the road traffic and an unprecedented jamming of vehicles reported.
	:	100% mass strike at Radhanagari town
	:	Police authorities successfully thwart an attempt to stop the traffic on the national highway.
	:	Destruction caused to five houses in Pattankodoli village.
	:	Mass strike called for in several villages across Panhala, Kagal, Hatkanangale, Pethwadgaon, and Shahuwadi talukas (tehsils)

## **8.2 News Printed in the Newspapers and their Captions**

'The unexpectedly imposed curfew order in the Sangli and Miraj towns as well as the overall inability gravely presented by the district administration and the police department while handling the total situation must be called upon as an unprecedented case of gross immaturity. Two major attributes needed in the leadership handling a riot are competency of diplomacy and an equally sound courage to take prompt action in order to regain control over the tense atmosphere. Precisely both of these essential qualities were found to be lacking in both the administrative and police leadership of the district. What surprises us most is that the police authorities simply could not imagine the repercussions of the conflict that had initially remained confined to the debate with police quickly spreading across the town. In fact, the unanswered question that has left every layman haunted today is how the police force could remain calm and indisposed even after being witness to the untoward happenings right in front of them. Efforts to tame the riots were begun substantially late and when the force was used to control the riots it blazed far more. The latest development is that the district administration is now hands in gloves with the police department. Curfew orders were proclaimed at any weird timing such as at midnight 12 am or even at 2 pm in the noon without giving any prior notice to the people at large to equip themselves properly. People returning from their workplaces suffered tremendously because of this sudden action. Although this curfew order has created an impression that the Sangli and Miraj towns are appearing to be quiet what has really happened is that the epidemic of the tension and riot has spread into the other parts of the district just like a bulging balloon when gets pressed at one end results into a bulge at the other end. Reverberations of these riots were felt across the whole of Maharashtra state so much so that the media was forced to sacrifice the 'Code of Conduct' it had voluntarily

followed till then. The policemen and the whole of the district administration not only prevented the journalists from suggesting a proper course of action but it went to the extent of thwarting the political and social leadership from finding some solution to the decaying situation. All these elements could have been of tremendous help but the administration has proved its gross immaturity by setting aside the helping hand offered by these sections of the society. **(Daily Newspaper '*Jana-Pravaha*', dated 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009).**

The worst effect of the curfew order imposed by the administration on the background of the riots in Miraj town is the general public which is not related with these vicious happenings in any manner whatsoever. The innocent people are being unnecessarily confronted with the ruthless and insensitive dictatorship of the district administration and that is why the overall opinion being expressed from all sections of the society is 'At least now....Enough'.

The riots flared up after the malicious acts of the hooligans to cause harm to the portrait erected by the public groups of Lord Ganesha festival to display the historic events. The district administration miserably failed to curb these riots and the decision to impose curfew order was taken only after the blazing emotions of riots spread everywhere. Also, the need for imposing a wide curfew too is being questioned. Handful of anti-social elements fulfilled their conspiracies by sparking off the riots but the district administration failed to handle the whole chapter with adequate seriousness as much as was perhaps necessary. The riots quickly spread across the whole district because neither the popular public opinion was respected nor the hooligans were quickly dealt with an iron fist. The general public had no bearing with these blazing emotions and their aftermath but the decision of curfew was proclaimed when the administration realized its failure to control of the deteriorating situation as though it was indirectly admitting its

failure. The life of the common man became all the more miserable because of the curfew order. Not only that but some of the unfortunates who were in dire need of medical care were deprived of that precious assistance and the police force made its show of strength by mercilessly beating the innocent people. Thousands of questions such as, was this proclamation of the curfew order necessary in the first place ?, what did the district administration achieve by holding the life general public hostage ?, why were the constitutional representatives of the people were keeping mum while notorious atrocities were being committed over the people ? are bursting in the minds of the people at large and the overall opinion being expressed from all sections of the society is 'Enough of this dictatorship of the district administration'.

Across last four days a repeated instances of the total lack of communication and coordination are being noticed between the district administration and the police force which is causing tremendous confusion. Nonetheless the worst sufferer of this absolute chaos is none other than the layman alone.

Not an iota of implementation of the decisions taken by the constitutional representatives of the people seems to have been carried out. Especially the happenings across the last four days have vividly revealed that the administration has gone to the extent of not taking the people's representatives in confidence.

**(Lokmat, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009)**

The tension in the atmosphere grew further because of the curfew order proclaimed by the police on the overall fiery background of the riots occurring in the town. Immediately after declaring the curfew order, the police force deployed on the roads started beating anybody and everybody found on the streets so bitterly that the unfortunate Prof. P.A. Bisure, of the Bapuji Salunkhe College died by the shock he suffered



from the hazardous beating inflicted upon him by the policemen in the Gandhi square (*chouwck*). At night when the caretaker minister, Dr. Patangrao Kadam, was acquainted with this ghastly incident of the death of Prof. Bisure, he was left utterly shocked.

Prof. Bisure (aged 54), who was very unfortunately caught in the lathi-charge harshly carried out in the Gandhi Square (*chouwck*) by the State Reserve Police Force, met with a fatal death today afternoon by the shock he suffered from. In the morning, he had started for Dr. Bapuji Salunkhe College on his motorcycle. He suffered with the heavy lathi-charge after reaching the Gandhi Square (*chouwck*). Even after that he managed to reach the college by staking all his strength but he opted to visit the residence of a friend in Vidyanagari after he found himself of instable health and died there itself. He originally belongs to the Janraowadi in the Miraj Taluka (*tehsil*) where his funeral was finally carried out in the evening.

**(Pudhari, dated 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009)**

The police constables deployed for patrolling for six days in succession seem to be causing their quick loss of patience. Policemen thrashed all those who attempted to come out on the streets on account of some inevitable problem. Even the drivers of few ambulances were not spared from this brutality. Sachin Khot, a driver of an ambulance was beaten up by the policemen on patrolling duty at 9 am on the hundred feet wide street and complained about him with the seniors. Similarly, an ambulance driver called Shantanu Jadhav was thrashed after forcing him to come out of the ambulance he was driving at Sangli College Corner at 4 pm to carry a patient from Atpadi. All the ambulance drivers gathered in the Civil Lines to condemn this inhuman act of the policemen but Mr. Vilas Abdagire, the President of the Ambulance Driver's Union, calmed everybody and said, 'We are offering our full cooperation to the police during the curfew hours. We start as per the directives issued by them

but the inhuman lathi-charge inflicted upon us while attempting to provide the essential services is tarnishing their own image. But this is not the time for making any strike or an agitation’.

**(Sakal, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009)**

### **8.3 Names of the People met by the Fact-Finding Committee**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name of the Individual</b>	<b>Designation</b>
1	Mr. Shyam Wardhane	District Collector, Sangli
2	Mr. Kirshna Prakash	Superintendent of Police, Sangli
3	Mr. Babasaheb Waghmode	Additional Superintendent of Police, Sangli Additional Superintendent of Police, Sangli
4	Mr. Balasaheb Reddy	Police Inspector, Miraj
5	Mr. Chandrakant Patil	MLA, BJP
6	Mr. Suresh (Bhau) Khade	MLA, BJP
7	Mr. Hafeez Dhature	MLA, Rashtriya Congress, Miraj
8	Mr. Suresh Awati	Corporation Leader, Miraj-Koopwaad, Municipal corporation, Rashtrawaadi Congress
9	Mr. Netaji Suryawanshi	Maratha Mahasangh, Miraj
10	Mr. Pawan Malgawe	Shiv Sena
11	Mr. Hanmant Pawar	Shiv Pratishthan, Sangli
12	Mr. J.A. Patil	Journalist – <i>Pudhari</i> , Miraj
13	Mr. Vikas Kulkarni	Free Lance Journalist, Sangli-Miraj
14	Mr. Deepak Dhawale	Journalist, Cable TV, Miraj

15	Mr. Suresh Herale	President of All-India Human Rights Organisation, Sangli District
16	Mr. Abhijit Harge	Deputy Chief of Tehsil Shiv Sena, Miraj
17	Mr. Shahnawaz Saudagar	Deputy President of Municipal Corporation's Area, Rashtrawaadi Congress
18	Mr. Viraj Kokane	President of Trader's Association, Miraj
19	Dr. Bhalchandra Sathye	Chief Secretary of BJP, Sangli District
20	Mr. Sunil Kulkarni	Senior Activist, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
21	Mr. Ramesh Kotibhaskar	Senior Activist, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
22	Mr. Milind Patange	Kumbhaarkhind, Sangli Village
23	Mr. Kedar Khadilkar	Sangli Village
24	Mr. Rajesh Deshmane	Social activist, Miraj
25	Mr. Makrand Waghmare	Social Activist, Miraj
26	Mr. Vijay Dhulubulu	Ex-Mayor, Congress, Miraj
27	Mr. Ashok Khatawakar	Hindu Unity Agitation
28	Mr. Karimbhai Mistri	Ex-Corporator, Congress, Sangli
29	Ms. Vimala Dhugade	Sathe Wadi, Miraj
30	Mr. Shyam Sathe	Sathe Wadi, Miraj
31	Ms. Gauribhai Bhore	Sathe Wadi, Miraj
32	Mr. Vilas Dhugade	Sathe Wadi, Miraj
33	Ms. Yashoda Lokhande	Sathe Wadi, Miraj
34	Mr. Rastam Saudagar	Miraj
35	Mr. Taufik Saudagar	Miraj
36	Mr. Arif Khatif	Miraj
37	Mr. Madhusudan Kulkarni	Sanaatan Prabhat, Miraj

38	Mr. Pradeep Joshi	Sanaatan Prabhat, Miraj
39	Mr. Imran Jappikhan	Miraj
40	Mr. Akbar Momin	Miraj
41	Adv. Mahesh Joshi	Advocate, Miraj
42	Adv. Anil Koparde	Advocate, Miraj
43	Mr. Suresh Halwankar	Group Leader, BJP, Ichalkaranji Municipal Corporation.
44	Mr. Hindurao Shelke	Ex-Deputy President, BJP
45	Mr. Anil Ghodke	President, Ichalkaranji Jeevan Mukti Seva Sanshta
46	Mr. Vivek Savant	Ichalkaranji Jeevan Mukti Seva Sanshta
47	Mr. Sachin Toraskar	Ichalkaranji Jeevan Mukti Seva Sanshta
48	Mr. Rajendra Shinde	Ex-President, Ichalkaranji Municipal Corporation, Shiv Sena
49	Mr. Madan Zore	Activist, BJP
50	Ms. Kasturi Malkari Lavte	Wife of Mr. Malkari Lavte (Chief of town, Shiv Sena)
51	Ms. Dhanashree Rajendra Shinde	Daughter of Mr. Rajendra Shinde
52	Mr. Avinash Patil	Journalist, Daily <i>The Human Rights News</i>
53	Mr. Ramchandra Dhekane	Journalist Daily <i>Samana</i>

## 8.4 An Introduction of the Fact-Finding Committee Members

- **Dr. Shantishree Pandit**

Professor of Political Science in Pune University

Learned up to M.A., M. Phil., and PhD.

Doctorate from JNU, Delhi, on the subject 'Parliament & Foreign Policy'

Has completed Post-Doctorate in the subject 'Peace & Conflict Studies' from the UPPSALA University, Sweden

32 Research Essays Published so far.

Names of the books published :

*Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy*

*Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia*

- **Adv. Ganesh Sovani, Thane**

An advocate practicing on civil & criminal side of Bombay High Court.

Researcher in Anti – Terror laws across the world, including of defunct POTA (Prevention of Terrorist Activities)' and has substantially participated in various security level conferences all over the country.

An advisor of the CHRSA, an offshoot of Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini.

An actively involved in 'Right to Information Act' awareness campaign.

- **Adv. Nitin Raut, Mumbai**

A senior lawyer in Mumbai, Operating as a Professional Lawyer for over 30 years in the Civil Court pertaining to the Property related disputes and litigations.

A regular author of many articles in Freedom First and Organizer magazines.

- **Adv. Ashish Chavan, Mumbai**

A professional lawyer of Criminal cases in the Mumbai High Court.

A young Lawyer busy in studying the present state of jails in the Maharashtra State.

Has acquired the prestigious post-graduation degree of L.L.M. in the subject of Human Rights from the Mumbai University.

- **Mr. Ravindra Sathe, Mumbai**

Operational in the Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini since 1992. Presently responsible for the post of Executive Director in the Prabodhini.

- **Mr. Milind Arolkar, Dombivli**

An Officer of the Research & Documentation Dept. of Rambhau Mhalgi Prabodhini.

Has completed a post-graduation degree course in Journalism'.

The member of the study group appointed for 'The Conflict Between Rioters in Bhiwandi and Police - 2006' and also a participant in the hearing on the same subject before the Hon. Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission.