APPENDIX V

PRESS COUNCIL OF INDIA

Guidelines on Communal Writings
(November 1968)

Recognising that the Press which enjoys the utmost freedom of expression has a great and vital role to play in educating and moulding public opinion on correct lines in regard to the need for friendly and harmonious relations between the various communities and religious groups forming the fabric of Indian political life and in mirroring the conscience of the best minds of the country to achieve national solidarity, the Press Council of India considers that this object would be defeated, communal peace and harmony disturbed and national unity disrupted if the Press does not strictly adhere to proper norms and standards in reporting or commenting on matters which bear on communal relations. Without attempting to be exhaustive, the Council considers, the following as offending against journalistic proprieties and ethics:

1. Distortion or exaggeration of facts or incidents in relation to communal matters or giving currency to unverified rumours, suspicious or inferences as if they were facts and base their comments on them.

2. Employment of intemperate or unrestrained language in the presentation of news or views, even as a piece of literary flourish or for the purpose of rhetoric or emphasis.
3. Encouraging or condoning violence even in the face of provocation as a means of obtaining redress of grievances whether the same be genuine or not.

4. While it is the legitimate function of the Press to draw attention to the genuine and legitimate grievances of any community with a view to having the same redressed by all peaceful, legal and legitimate means, it is improper and a breach of journalistic ethics to invent grievances or to exaggerate real grievances, as these tend to promote communal ill-feeling and accentuate discord.

5. Scurrilous and untrue attacks on communities, and individuals, particularly when this is accompanied by charges attributing misconduct to them as due to their being members of a particular community or caste.

6. Falsely giving a communal colour to incidents which might occur in which members of different communities happen to be involved.

7. Emphasising matters that are apt to produce communal hatred or ill-will or fostering feelings of distrust between communities.

8. Publishing alarming news which are in substance untrue or make provocative comments on such news or events otherwise calculated to embitter relations between different communities or regional or linguistic groups.
9. Exaggerating actual happenings to achieve sensationalism and publication of news which adversely affect communal harmony with banner headlines or in distinctive type.

10. Making disrespectful, derogatory or inserting remarks on or reference to the different religions or faiths or the founders.