

# AID Conference 2004

## *Minutes for Session Named Media Workshop*

**Date:** 05/30/2004

**Time From:** 15:54

**To:** 16:45

**Minutes Taken By:** SASTRY

**Number of attendees:** 40

**Audio/Visual Component?**

**Speaker/Panelist Names:**

1. Dilip D'Souza
- 2.

**What they are speaking about:** Media Workshop

At the end of speech, there was tasks given. One on **Letter to editor** and the other **Op/Ed**.

**Main Presentation:**

**Dilip :** This is a workshop aimed at writing letters etc. Wasn't sure how to tackle this. My idea is, u guys work and I will sit here. ☺ Flippancy aside, I will give u a few tips about how I write letters. Read Bob Jensen's leaflets. The lesson I learnt is, u have talk about one issue. u have to find a way. Its not easy. The fact is, u may be passionate, but u cannot write more than 200 words. So what to do? U may see an OP/Ed running upto 700/800 words. So stripping the ideas is a good exercise for yourself in clarifying your thoughts. Having done, I will contradict myself now. Say, u write a long statement on war is bad. People wont read that long stuff. But if u connect things say, war is bad and then connect it with some non war stuff, that's an immediate thing that editors are looking for. People are looking for different things connected. That makes the issue clear up. Some years ago, there was this article "Death in Custody" of a man who served in army. This man who was leading the protest was beaten in custody to death. He served in army. I wanted to write this article. He connected it with another soldier's story who just came home from border during the Bombay riots only to see his house vandalized. So the point is, see how we treat our army people who we consider them as heroes. There is another way we can raw parallel. You might draw parallel to other people who was beaten to death in police custody. Rodney King's example is there. You may make environmental connection. So the bottom line is, making connection to throw new light on the issue. the goal is to find a new perspective. Another effective

way is to humor. There are so many absurd things happening that humor becomes a strong weapon to attack them.

There was this move once by the Shiv Sena in Bombay. they protested against govt. move to paint the railway station green saying its muslim color. I wrote an article amusing this ridiculous protest. The humor involved was, should I stop using rupee notes since they are green?

I want to think a little about Op/Ed. You should not see the word limit as a limitation. U should see it as a way to improve your effectiveness. It is much harder to convey information in 500 words effectively as compared to 5000 words. I often think about, if I have an issue to write about, what would be the things I would say. I cant say it's a conscious process but something going in the back of my mind. So now let me put it down in paper. Write it simply as if you are speaking to them. Even say, if you are abusing them, put it down in paper. Picture a person sitting across you. Even if u are not persuading him, think what will be the words you be talking back and forth. When you write, you should have some hook of the information. Otherwise there is no way that the reader will complete reading. The last thing on op/ed I want to say is, at the end try to draw a larger lesson. Show that the thing you talked about might be a tiny but it has larger implications. Try to get the reader started thinking about it in a broader picture.

### **Question/Answer Session:**

2. Whom should we address the press release?

A. Dilip: You have to do homework. Address it directly to Chief Reporter. If you know the name, then address it directly the name and follow up.

3. In terms of getting the hook in the beginning how do you think we should frame the hook in such a way that people do not automatically believe that you have opinion that they are not in favor?

A Dilip: the key to that is to have an open mind. It is important to understand there may be people who have opposite views. Lets assume they are the majority. Just try it. Think, if you were in that position what would you have done. What are the connections that you can draw. If you are talking about local issues. Say, you draw parallel between a dam in India and then a dam in India.

4. do you ever find yourself in a situation that you must have to write in a deadline or pressure that you must write something everyday?

A Dilip : I don't do it. Some days I get good ideas but on some other day I don't. so I don't make it a habit or something.

5. Its hard to imagine that Times of India is becoming like a tabloid. I wrote an article "Effect of WTO on Drug prices in India" but never got published. Any thoughts?

A Dilip : Your article, to be frank, has boring title. You should think about the stuff that we were talking, which is, being effective. So being effective is very important.

6. How do you balance between being objective and not reflecting your stand?

A. everybody has got a bias. And there is no point trying to hide that. Having said that, as a reporter, its your duty and responsibility to be objective and try to report it to readers from different angles.

7. What do you think about Hindu/Muslim thing?

A. In the height of the violence in Gujarat, I went to ahmedabad and was sitting at sabarmati ashram. There was another person sitting there. When we scratched the surface of discussion, he started blaming the muslims etc. he was getting madder and madder. At that time, another journalist referred to 200 rapes in juhapura. The person got totally mad and started complaining about the journalist. The point is, there has to be a way to talk to people. **Democracy needs both sides to be talking.**

8. In AID, we mostly write about issues. The habit is to, take a stand on somethings. Do u have any advice on, opinions being written on article and stands? Like how much should I extract etc?

A. if you are in doubt, its better to refer to the original author.

9. how you manage to get articles published in rediff? Do u think internet journalism is filling the void that mainstream is avoiding?

A. all the people at rediff used to work for sudnay observer before where I used to write columns. So when they started rediff, they asked if I want to publish.

There is no void. Its pointless to think there is void. You can keep on complaining. But try to take it as a challenge.

10. Having worked with groups like NBA what are you peeved about?

A. though you are right, how will you go about communicating it to people in persuasive way. That's the advice.

### **Additional Notes/ Observations**

**WORKSHOP was conducted. Subjects were given.**

#### **Subjects :**

1. Fairly recently there was a prospect of Sonia Gandhi becoming the prime minister and there was Sushma Swaraj saying she will shave her head. And then a congress member said see how she said though she is married. Comment on this.

### **FINAL STATEMENT :**

Dilip : How many of you have finished?

Some had partly finished.

Dilip: The groups have made different approaches. So if you, everybody tries to attack a problem in a different way. Did you find a hook to start your article? Again, if you see, your first hook was different.