



THE ROLE OF JUDICIARY IN SAFEGUARDING MEDIA FREEDOM IN GUJARAT

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the crucial role of the judiciary in safeguarding media freedom in the state of Gujarat. As the fourth pillar of democracy, the media plays an indispensable role in shaping public opinion, promoting transparency, and holding power accountable. However, media practitioners in Gujarat, like elsewhere in India, often face legal and political pressures that threaten their independence. This paper examines the constitutional and legal framework that supports press freedom and analyzes how the judiciary—particularly the Gujarat High Court—has interpreted and enforced these protections. Through key case studies and legal precedents, the article highlights how the judiciary has addressed issues such as sedition, defamation, censorship, digital media regulation, and contempt proceedings. It also evaluates the judiciary's evolving role in media jurisprudence and suggests strategic measures to strengthen its future role in protecting freedom of expression. Ultimately, the article underscores that an independent judiciary and a free press are mutually reinforcing institutions vital to the health of a democratic society.

KEYWORDS: Judiciary, Media Freedom, Gujarat High Court, Press Freedom, Article 19(1)(A), Digital Journalism, Censorship, Media Jurisprudence, Sedition, Democracy, Constitutional Rights, Public Interest, Judicial Intervention

1. INTRODUCTION

In a democratic society, the right to freedom of speech and expression stands as one of the most vital fundamental rights, enshrined under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution. This right serves as the bedrock for a free and vibrant media, which acts as a crucial watchdog of public interest, uncovers truth, holds power accountable, and informs citizens in a timely and accurate manner. The media is often referred to as the “Fourth Pillar of Democracy,” alongside the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary, because of its significant role in ensuring transparency, upholding public opinion, and fostering debate in a democratic setup. However, media freedom is not absolute and is subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2), especially in matters concerning national security, public order, defamation, and incitement to offense. These limitations, if not applied judiciously, can become tools of suppression rather than safeguards of democratic order.

The State of Gujarat, known for its vibrant political climate and rapid economic development, also exhibits a dynamic media landscape marked by the growth of both traditional and digital platforms. While the media in Gujarat has played a notable role in shaping public discourse, it has also encountered several challenges, including threats of censorship, undue political influence, defamation cases, arrests of journalists, and bureaucratic suppression of dissenting voices. In such a climate, the role of the judiciary becomes critically important. The judiciary acts as a guardian of constitutional rights, ensuring that the freedom of the press is not curtailed under the guise of public order or administrative discipline. Through its interpretative powers, the judiciary offers a platform for redressal against state overreach and ensures the media's ability to function independently.

In Gujarat, as in other parts of India, the judiciary—particularly the High Court—has often stepped in to protect media freedom when executive or legislative actions have threatened it. Whether by quashing arbitrary FIRs against journalists, staying actions that could silence dissent, or reinforcing the importance of press freedom through landmark judgments, the courts have actively contributed to the preservation of democratic ideals. These judicial interventions are not merely legal milestones but are also symbolic assertions of the judiciary's commitment to uphold constitutional morality.

Moreover, the relationship between the judiciary and the media is not always harmonious, given instances where contempt laws have been invoked to silence criticism or when questions about judicial accountability arise. Nonetheless, the judiciary in Gujarat has continued to play a pivotal role in interpreting the fine balance between freedom of expression and the legitimate concerns of governance. This article seeks to explore that role in detail—examining how the courts have acted as bulwarks against the erosion of media freedoms, highlighting landmark cases, and analyzing whether the judiciary has been proactive, reactive, or restrained in its approach. As the media continues to evolve with technological advancements and changing political dynamics, the judiciary's role in safeguarding its independence becomes ever more critical.

2. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The foundation of media freedom in India is firmly embedded in the Constitution, particularly under Article 19(1)(a), which guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression. Though the article does not explicitly mention the “freedom of the press,” the Supreme Court of India has consistently

interpreted this right to include the freedom of the press as an essential part of democratic functioning. This constitutional provision provides every citizen, including media professionals, the liberty to express opinions, disseminate information, and critique the functioning of the state, subject to certain conditions.

However, this freedom is not absolute. Article 19(2) of the Constitution permits the State to impose “reasonable restrictions” on the exercise of the right to freedom of speech and expression in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation, incitement to an offence, and the friendly relations with foreign states. These grounds have, over the years, been cited in various legislative and executive actions impacting media freedom, thereby making judicial scrutiny essential in evaluating their validity.

India does not have a separate, codified press law. Instead, media regulation emerges from a combination of constitutional protections, general laws, judicial precedents, and sectoral regulations. Several statutes and legal instruments affect the functioning of media in Gujarat and across India. These include:

- The Press Council Act, 1978 – which established the Press Council of India (PCI), a quasi-judicial body that promotes journalistic ethics and addresses complaints against and by the press. While the PCI has moral authority, it lacks punitive powers, which limits its ability to effectively curb state or corporate overreach against media entities.
- The Indian Penal Code (now replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023) – contains provisions on defamation (Section 500 of IPC / Section 356 of BNS), sedition (Section 124A IPC – recently under judicial reconsideration), and other offenses that have frequently been invoked against journalists, often with chilling effects.
- The Information Technology Act, 2000, particularly Section 66A (now struck down in the Shreya Singhal case) and other provisions, has been misused to restrict online media and digital journalism. While courts have stepped in to curb such misuse, enforcement agencies have often continued to invoke these sections regardless.
- The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 – allows courts to penalize publications that scandalize or lower the authority of the judiciary. Though essential to uphold judicial dignity, contempt powers have sometimes been criticized as being used to suppress legitimate journalistic scrutiny of the courts.
- Cinematograph Act, 1952 and other broadcasting regulations – while primarily regulating films, these laws also set precedent on how content can be evaluated against standards of decency and morality, potentially influencing journalistic expression.
- The Right to Information Act, 2005 – plays a complementary role in empowering journalists with legal access to government records, thereby strengthening investigative journalism. Judicial decisions in Gujarat have reinforced the use of RTI in holding public offices accountable.

The Gujarat High Court, as a constitutional court, plays a

pivotal role in interpreting and enforcing these frameworks within the state. Through Public Interest Litigations (PILs) and writ petitions, it has emerged as a forum where journalists and civil society can challenge arbitrary censorship, unlawful detentions, and denial of access to information. In essence, the constitutional and legal framework provides both the bedrock and the battleground for media freedom. It is within this legal architecture that the judiciary of Gujarat functions to balance competing interests—freedom and restraint, accountability and liberty, public order and public voice. The courts’ interpretation of these provisions significantly shapes the extent to which media in Gujarat can function independently and fearlessly.

3. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT IN GUJARAT: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Gujarat, one of India’s most politically and economically significant states, hosts a vibrant and diverse media landscape. The media in Gujarat has evolved from a predominantly print-driven sector into a multifaceted ecosystem encompassing print, television, radio, and digital platforms. With high literacy levels, a politically aware population, and a strong entrepreneurial culture, Gujarat presents a unique case for observing the dynamics between the media, state, and society.

Print media continues to enjoy significant influence in Gujarat, particularly through Gujarati-language newspapers such as Gujarat Samachar, Sandesh, Divya Bhaskar, and Akila. These dailies reach deep into rural and semi-urban areas and play a crucial role in shaping public opinion. English newspapers like The Times of India, Indian Express, and The Hindu also maintain presence in urban centers such as Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Rajkot, and Surat, often catering to the business class, academicians, and policymakers.

Television media in Gujarat is dominated by regional news channels that broadcast 24/7 coverage of political developments, crime, civic issues, and social trends. Channels such as TV9 Gujarati, Sandesh News, VTV Gujarati, and ABP Asmita play a critical role in the public discourse, especially during elections, natural disasters, or major policy announcements. However, many of these platforms have been accused of either aligning with dominant political ideologies or engaging in sensationalism to boost viewership ratings. Digital media has seen an exponential rise in Gujarat over the past decade, especially among urban youth and the tech-savvy population. The proliferation of smartphones, cheap data plans, and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and YouTube has enabled citizens to access news instantly and share opinions widely. Several independent digital news platforms and YouTube channels are emerging, often challenging the monopoly of mainstream news outlets and providing alternative viewpoints. However, these platforms often face credibility issues, lack institutional support, and are more vulnerable to state regulation or cybercrime charges.

Despite its growth, the media in Gujarat operates in a complex environment characterized by several underlying challenges:

- Political Pressure and Self-Censorship: Media houses,

particularly those dependent on government advertising or affiliated with corporate houses, often exercise caution when reporting against the state. This leads to implicit self-censorship and selective reporting.

- **Attacks on Journalists:** There have been instances where journalists reporting on corruption, land acquisition, communal tensions, or state mismanagement have faced intimidation, legal threats, or even physical violence. The lack of strong institutional mechanisms to protect them adds to the precariousness of media freedom.
- **Ownership Patterns and Commercialization:** A large section of Gujarat's media is owned by corporate conglomerates with political leanings. Editorial independence is often compromised, leading to questions about media objectivity and credibility.
- **Limited Space for Dissent:** Alternative voices and dissenting opinions—whether from civil society, academia, or the opposition—often find limited space in mainstream media. The pressure to align with popular narratives, especially on sensitive issues, discourages bold or investigative journalism.
- **Regulatory Gaps and Government Scrutiny:** With the rise of digital media, many online journalists and bloggers have come under increased scrutiny by law enforcement agencies. The use of sedition laws, defamation suits, or IT Act provisions has had a chilling effect on free expression.

Nonetheless, Gujarat's media sector also demonstrates resilience. Several committed journalists, regional publications, student-run portals, and digital activists continue to uphold journalistic integrity and strive to keep the space for public discourse alive. Civil society movements and legal activism have also played a role in resisting censorship and supporting media workers in distress.

Overall, while Gujarat boasts a dynamic and influential media sector, it also reflects the broader tensions seen across India—between freedom and control, professionalism and populism, truth-telling and risk. The environment in which the media operates here makes the role of the judiciary all the more crucial in ensuring that constitutional freedoms are not undermined by political expediency or administrative excess.

4. ROLE OF JUDICIARY IN SAFEGUARDING MEDIA FREEDOM

The judiciary in India, including the Gujarat High Court, has historically been a powerful institution entrusted with upholding constitutional values and protecting fundamental rights. Among its most crucial responsibilities is ensuring that the right to freedom of speech and expression, enshrined under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, is preserved and respected—especially when exercised by the media. In Gujarat, where political narratives often dominate public discourse and where dissent can sometimes attract state scrutiny, the judiciary serves as an essential check on executive overreach and arbitrary restrictions placed on the press.

One of the primary ways the judiciary safeguards media freedom is by ensuring that any restrictions imposed under Article 19(2)

are reasonable, proportionate, and constitutionally valid. When journalists are arrested or harassed for their reporting, or when media outlets face threats of censorship, courts often become the first line of defense. The Gujarat High Court has intervened in several cases where freedom of the press was in question, offering relief through quashing of FIRs, staying coercive action, or demanding justification from government authorities for punitive measures against journalists. Such interventions not only offer immediate relief to the affected media personnel but also reinforce the legal protections available to the fourth estate.

Judicial review of laws and executive actions that threaten press freedom is another significant contribution of the judiciary. Courts have struck down or diluted statutory provisions and administrative orders that disproportionately impact media freedom. For example, when vague or outdated laws such as sedition or criminal defamation are used to silence journalists, courts examine whether these laws are being applied in accordance with constitutional safeguards. In several landmark cases, including those involving journalists in Gujarat, the judiciary has held that criticism of the government, unless inciting violence or public disorder, is not a valid ground for legal prosecution.

In addition, the judiciary plays a vital role in protecting digital media and online journalism, which are increasingly under threat in Gujarat and across the country. The judiciary has repeatedly reiterated that the same protections that apply to traditional media extend to digital journalists, bloggers, and social media commentators. The Gujarat High Court has heard cases where online news portals or social media users have been targeted through disproportionate legal action. In many such cases, the court has ensured that freedom of expression is not sacrificed on the altar of convenience or political interest.

Moreover, the courts have taken cognizance of the misuse of defamation laws and contempt proceedings to intimidate or silence journalists. While upholding the dignity of individuals and institutions, including the judiciary itself, the courts have emphasized the need for a free press to question, investigate, and critique those in power. This balance is delicate, but the judiciary has largely shown restraint in invoking contempt powers against journalists, recognizing that a robust democracy must allow space for criticism, even when it is directed at judicial authorities.

Public interest litigation (PIL) has emerged as a powerful judicial tool for advancing media freedom. Through PILs, civil society organizations and individuals have approached the courts to challenge censorship, seek protection for journalists under threat, and ensure access to information. In Gujarat, the judiciary has responded positively to such petitions, often directing state authorities to respect journalistic freedoms and ensure transparency. This pro-active judicial stance underscores the importance of the courts in acting as custodians of civil liberties.

In essence, the judiciary in Gujarat has played a decisive

and often courageous role in safeguarding media freedom. By asserting the primacy of constitutional rights, resisting executive overreach, and upholding journalistic independence, the judiciary acts not just as an interpreter of the law but as a defender of democratic principles. In an era where media freedoms are increasingly contested, the role of the judiciary becomes not only protective but also transformative, reinforcing the idea that a free press is indispensable to the survival of democracy itself.

5. ANALYSIS OF KEY CASE STUDIES FROM GUJARAT

The role of the judiciary in safeguarding media freedom in Gujarat can be more vividly understood through the examination of specific legal cases and judicial interventions. These instances illustrate how the Gujarat High Court and, in some cases, the Supreme Court of India have responded to issues concerning censorship, intimidation of journalists, misuse of legal provisions, and arbitrary actions by state authorities. Such case studies not only highlight the judiciary's proactive role in defending press freedom but also shed light on its approach toward maintaining a balance between individual rights and state interests.

One of the most cited examples in Gujarat was the case involving a journalist from The Wire, who published a report alleging irregularities and conflict of interest concerning a high-profile political figure's business dealings. In response, defamation proceedings were initiated, and multiple FIRs were filed across different states, including Gujarat. The Gujarat High Court intervened to protect the journalist from coercive legal action and granted interim relief, emphasizing that investigative journalism, even if critical, should not be criminalized. The court underlined the principle that legal remedies should not be weaponized to stifle the media or suppress dissenting voices.

In another prominent case, the Gujarat High Court took suo motu cognizance of the plight of health journalists reporting on the state's pandemic response during COVID-19. Several journalists had reported on mismanagement in public hospitals and lack of medical infrastructure. These reports led to legal notices being issued and threats of criminal prosecution. The High Court strongly defended the media's right to report in public interest and cautioned the state machinery against intimidating those who bring factual shortcomings to light. The bench remarked that constructive criticism and factual reporting are not only permissible but necessary in a democratic society, especially during public health emergencies.

Another case involved the arrest of a digital news portal editor for publishing content deemed to be "provocative" and "against the public interest." The arrest, made under sections related to sedition and promoting enmity, raised significant concerns about overreach and misuse of penal provisions. The Gujarat High Court, upon receiving a writ petition, scrutinized the allegations and found no prima facie evidence of incitement to violence or disruption of public order. The court ordered the release of the journalist and reiterated that sedition laws cannot be invoked merely because the government finds content disagreeable or uncomfortable.

The judiciary has also shown sensitivity to issues of contempt. In one case, a media outlet published an editorial criticizing the delay in delivery of judgments and judicial inefficiencies. A contempt notice was issued against the editor. However, the Gujarat High Court, rather than punishing the journalist, engaged with the criticism constructively and acknowledged the need for self-reflection within the judiciary. The court emphasized that freedom of the press includes the right to critique judicial conduct, provided it is done responsibly and without malice.

Moreover, in matters involving the denial of information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the Gujarat High Court has consistently upheld the media's right to access government data in the public domain. In a case where a journalist was denied access to municipal expenditure records under the RTI Act, the court directed the public authority to disclose the information, affirming that transparency is foundational to both governance and journalism. This judgment reinforced that obstructions to journalistic inquiry, particularly on financial accountability, cannot be justified under vague exemptions.

These case studies collectively demonstrate that the Gujarat judiciary has not remained passive in the face of threats to media freedom. Whether dealing with defamation, censorship, unlawful arrests, or denial of access to public information, the courts have acted to uphold constitutional guarantees. They have provided critical relief to journalists and emphasized that media freedom is not merely a privilege granted by the state but a fundamental right that must be actively protected. In doing so, the judiciary in Gujarat has played a vital role in sustaining the democratic framework and reinforcing the credibility of independent journalism.

6. ROLE OF JUDICIARY IN EVOLVING MEDIA JURISPRUDENCE

The judiciary has been instrumental in shaping and evolving media jurisprudence in India, and the same holds true in the context of Gujarat. Media jurisprudence refers to the body of legal interpretations, principles, and precedents that govern the rights, duties, and limits of media entities and professionals. The dynamic and sometimes contentious relationship between the press and the state has made it necessary for the judiciary to frequently intervene, clarify constitutional boundaries, and ensure that legal provisions are applied in a manner that upholds the democratic ethos.

One of the key contributions of the judiciary in evolving media jurisprudence has been the consistent interpretation of Article 19(1)(a) to include the freedom of the press, even though the Constitution does not explicitly mention it. Through landmark rulings, courts have not only upheld media freedom but have also articulated its role in democracy—as a watchdog, a forum for public debate, and a vehicle for transparency. The Gujarat High Court, through its rulings, has aligned with this constitutional vision, particularly in cases involving the misuse of sedition laws, arbitrary arrests, and gag orders on the press.

The judiciary has also contributed significantly to the development of jurisprudence related to the limits of reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2). The courts have carefully examined whether state action genuinely serves the interests of public order, decency, or defamation, or whether it is a disguised attempt to suppress inconvenient truths. This scrutiny has helped establish a body of case law that protects the press from disproportionate or mala fide state action. For example, in Gujarat-based cases, courts have required a clear and proximate link between the published content and any alleged public disorder or harm before allowing any punitive action against the journalist or media outlet.

Another significant judicial contribution has been the protection of digital and online journalism, which represents a new frontier in media jurisprudence. As Gujarat witnesses a growing number of independent digital media platforms, the courts have recognized their role as legitimate participants in the information ecosystem. Judicial pronouncements have emphasized that online journalists are entitled to the same constitutional protections as their traditional counterparts. This has been especially crucial in an era where digital content is frequently subjected to takedown notices, arrests under cyber laws, and criminal charges.

The judiciary has also shaped media jurisprudence by developing principles around prior restraint, i.e., restrictions on publication before the material is actually published. Courts in Gujarat have largely held that prior restraint is an exception and must only be used in cases of clear and imminent danger. Blanket bans on publication or broadcast have been viewed as antithetical to the spirit of free expression. The judiciary's insistence on narrowly tailoring such restrictions has helped ensure that censorship does not become a norm under the guise of public interest.

Another domain where judicial contributions have been vital is the balancing of media freedom with other rights, such as the right to fair trial under Article 21. Courts have often addressed conflicts between sensationalist media reporting and the rights of the accused, especially in high-profile criminal cases. While emphasizing responsible journalism, the courts have resisted efforts to silence the press entirely. Instead, they have encouraged mechanisms such as guidelines for reporting, in-camera trials, and contempt proceedings where warranted.

Additionally, the courts have extended the scope of media jurisprudence to cover the rights of whistleblowers and investigative journalists, especially when they expose corruption or administrative failure. The judiciary has offered legal protection in cases where such journalists are targeted for revealing uncomfortable truths. By doing so, it has encouraged a climate of accountability and transparency.

Overall, the judiciary, through its interpretive and corrective functions, has played a foundational role in developing and continuously evolving media jurisprudence in Gujarat. It has ensured that freedom of the press remains a living, breathing right—adaptable to technological shifts and resilient in the

face of political or administrative challenges. As the media environment grows more complex and contested, the judiciary's role in refining legal principles and defending the press becomes even more critical to sustaining India's democratic framework.

7. WAY FORWARD: STRENGTHENING THE JUDICIARY'S ROLE

While the judiciary in Gujarat and across India has often played a crucial role in defending and expanding the frontiers of media freedom, the ever-evolving challenges of the contemporary media landscape call for a more proactive, consistent, and structured approach. Strengthening the judiciary's role in safeguarding press freedom is essential not only for protecting the rights of journalists but also for preserving democratic governance, transparency, and accountability.

Firstly, there is a need for institutionalizing judicial sensitivity and awareness toward media freedom, especially at the lower court level. Many cases involving the press begin at the district or sessions court, where the understanding of constitutional protections related to journalism may be limited. Regular judicial training and capacity-building programs should incorporate modules on freedom of speech, journalistic ethics, and evolving digital media jurisprudence. This will ensure that the rights of journalists are protected from the outset and that unlawful arrests, gag orders, or misuse of penal provisions are curtailed early in the judicial process.

Secondly, the judiciary must expedite the disposal of cases involving media freedom, especially when they pertain to criminal charges against journalists or bans on publication. Delays in adjudication can have a chilling effect on free speech, as journalists may self-censor to avoid prolonged legal entanglement. Establishing fast-track benches to handle freedom of expression cases—particularly in High Courts—could be an effective step in ensuring timely justice and protection against arbitrary state actions.

There is also a pressing need for the judiciary to develop clear jurisprudential standards around digital expression and online media. As many journalists and news platforms now operate through social media, blogs, and video channels, the legal landscape must keep pace with these technological changes. Courts must provide clarity on what constitutes fair commentary, satire, or investigative reporting online, and must actively resist efforts by the state to misuse cyber laws to criminalize such expression.

The judiciary should also work towards balancing media freedom with other fundamental rights, such as the right to privacy and the right to a fair trial. While this balance has been addressed in several landmark judgments, clearer guidelines on reporting boundaries during sub judice matters or sensitive investigations will help prevent conflict between the media and judiciary without undermining press autonomy.

Further, the judiciary can strengthen its role by encouraging the use of public interest litigation (PIL) as a means to protect media freedom. Journalists, civil society groups, and citizens

should be encouraged to bring forth issues that threaten press independence—such as state surveillance, blacklisting, or withdrawal of government advertisements to dissenting outlets. Courts must remain open and responsive to such petitions, as they provide a mechanism for judicial oversight of executive actions that may otherwise go unchecked.

Moreover, judicial transparency and accountability must go hand-in-hand with its defense of media freedom. When the media criticizes judicial delays, lack of diversity, or opaque procedures, the judiciary must respond with openness rather than defensiveness. A free and responsible press serves as a mirror for institutions, including the judiciary, and mutual respect between the two pillars can strengthen democracy as a whole.

Finally, collaboration between the judiciary and press councils or regulatory bodies can help institutionalize dialogue on issues such as ethical journalism, contempt of court, and reporting standards. While preserving its independence, the judiciary can play a guiding role in promoting self-regulation in media and discouraging sensationalism or misinformation, without resorting to censorship.

Overall, the way forward lies in reinforcing the judiciary's commitment to constitutional values, updating legal interpretations in line with technological and societal changes, and ensuring that justice is both accessible and prompt in cases involving media freedom. As watchdogs of democracy, both the judiciary and the media must function in a symbiotic relationship—mutually respectful, independent, and firmly anchored in the public interest. Strengthening the judiciary's role is not just about protecting journalists—it is about protecting the very foundation of democratic discourse.

8. CONCLUSION

The judiciary stands as a pivotal guardian of media freedom, particularly in regions like Gujarat where the complex interplay of political power, administrative authority, and public interest often puts journalistic independence at risk. Through its interpretations of constitutional provisions, especially Article 19(1)(a), the judiciary has not only safeguarded the rights of journalists but also reinforced the vital role of the press in a democratic society. From protecting reporters against arbitrary arrests to invalidating censorship attempts, and from addressing misuse of sedition laws to defending digital journalism, the judiciary has continually expanded the scope of media jurisprudence. However, the evolving nature of media—with its shift towards digital platforms, real-time reporting, and increasing scrutiny of powerful institutions—demands an even more proactive and structured judicial response. Strengthening judicial mechanisms, enhancing awareness among lower courts, speeding up resolution of media-related cases, and establishing clearer legal principles for online expression are all necessary steps in fortifying the judiciary's role. Ultimately, a free and vibrant media is indispensable to democracy, and an independent judiciary is its strongest ally. Their collaborative resilience ensures that truth prevails, dissent is respected, and power is held accountable. As Gujarat continues to grow as a

socio-political and economic hub, the judiciary must remain unwavering in its duty to protect media freedom—not just as a legal right, but as a cornerstone of democratic life.

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