

OFFICE OF THE SUB-DIVISIONAL MAGISTRATE

Taluka Satara, District Satara

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

File Reference: SDM/Satara/Misc/2002/847 **Subject:** Closure of Investigation - Multiple Unnatural Deaths, Korde Tal Area, Talegaon **Date:** 28th November 2002

From: Shri R. K. Patwardhan, IAS Sub-Divisional Magistrate Taluka Satara

To: 1. Superintendent of Police, Satara District 2. Sub-Inspector, Taluka Police Station 3. Constable In-Charge, Talegaon Chowki 4. Talathi, Circle Talegaon 5. Block Development Officer, Talegaon Block

Copy for Information: - District Collector, Satara - Forest Range Officer, Babhul Range

BACKGROUND

This office has received correspondence from various sources regarding a series of unnatural deaths occurring at Korde Tal (lake), Village Talegaon, over a period spanning 1988 to 2002. The deaths involve six (6) minor children as follows:

Incident	Year	Victims	Ruling
1	1988	Ira & Asha Mane (twins, age 8)	Accidental Drowning
2	1995	Neelam & Omkar Karande (ages 14, 12)	Suicide
3	2002	Gauri More (age 12)	Suicide

One survivor exists from incident 3: Aarav More (age 8).

REVIEW UNDERTAKEN

Upon receiving informal communication from Central Investigation Department (CID) Pune regarding possible pattern in these incidents, this office undertook a review of available documentation, including:

1. Police First Information Reports (3 nos.)
 2. Inquest reports (3 nos.)
 3. Death certificates (5 nos.)
 4. Statement of survivor (1 no., partial)
 5. Village officials' inputs
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FINDINGS

A. Regarding Individual Incidents

Incident 1 (1988 - Twin Girls): The deaths were ruled accidental drowning resulting from flash flood conditions during monsoon. Investigation was conducted appropriately for the circumstances. No evidence of foul play was found. Case properly closed as Accidental Death Report (ADR).

Incident 2 (1995 - Karande Siblings): The deaths were ruled suicide. While the children had no documented history of mental disturbance, the village environment with prevalent belief in supernatural curse may have influenced their actions. No evidence of third party involvement was found. Case properly closed.

Incident 3 (2002 - More Child): Death ruled suicide, consistent with previous incidents. Survivor's testimony references supernatural elements (ghosts, shadows) which are not admissible as evidence of human perpetrators. No physical evidence of foul play recovered. Case properly closed.

B. Regarding Pattern Theory

The CID communication suggested that the pattern of child deaths (always pairs, always at same location, same ruling) warrants deeper investigation.

This office has considered this suggestion and notes:

1. All three incidents occurred at the same location (Korde Tal)
2. All victims were minors
3. All cases were ruled without foul play
4. All post-mortem examinations were waived
5. No accused was ever identified

However, we also note:

1. Time gap between incidents (7 years between 1 and 2, 7 years between 2 and 3) is inconsistent with serial perpetrator behavior
2. Village has strong cultural belief in supernatural curse, which adequately explains recurrence
3. No witnesses have come forward with evidence of criminal activity

4. Local investigation resources confirm no suspicious circumstances

C. Regarding Procedural Adequacy

Some procedural questions were raised:

- Why no post-mortem conducted in any case?
- Why was survivor child's location not recorded?
- Why minimal investigation despite pattern?

We note that:

- Post-mortem waiver is permitted when external examination is conclusive and family objects on religious grounds
 - Survivor location is family matter, not police requirement for closed case
 - Investigation resources are allocated based on available evidence, which did not indicate criminal activity
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CONCLUSIONS

Based on the review of available documentation and inputs from local officials, this office concludes:

1. **No evidence exists to suggest that any of the three incidents involved criminal activity.** The deaths appear to be tragic accidents and/or suicides influenced by local superstition.
 2. **The pattern theory** (that incidents are connected and indicate ongoing criminal conspiracy) is not supported by evidence. While the coincidences are notable, coincidence alone does not constitute grounds for criminal investigation.
 3. **Local investigation procedures** were adequate for the circumstances, though some documentation improvements could be recommended.
 4. **No further investigation is warranted** under the current evidence status.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Lake Safety:** The Sarpanch and Block Development Officer should implement warning signage and fencing around Korde Tal to prevent future accidental drownings.
2. **Mental Health Outreach:** Given the apparent influence of superstition on vulnerable minds, the PHC should be directed to conduct awareness programs.
3. **Documentation Standards:** The police chowki should be reminded to maintain complete records including survivor locations in future cases.
4. **Case Files:** All three cases shall remain closed unless new substantive evidence emerges.

DIRECTIVE

In light of above, all addressees are directed to:

1. Consider the matter closed
2. File correspondence accordingly
3. Implement recommendations as applicable
4. Not entertain further inquiries on closed cases without written orders from District level or above

Any new evidence, if obtained, should be routed through proper channels for assessment before any investigation is reopened.

ORDERED THIS DAY:

R. K. Patwardhan, IAS Sub-Divisional Magistrate Taluka Satara

Date: 28th November 2002

[Official Seal: SDM Office, Satara]

ADDENDUM (Handwritten, unsigned):

CID officer (one Arjun something, from Pune) visited office on 3rd December regarding this memo. Informed him matter is closed at SDM level. He requested copy of memo. Copy provided.

Officer seemed dissatisfied. Mentioned he is continuing investigation "informally" through some local doctor at PHC.

No further action required from this office unless ordered by DC.

ATTACHED: Note from SP Office (Received 15th December 2002)

SDM Satara,

Reference your memo dated 28-11-2002.

The CID officer mentioned (SI Arjun Gadkari) is proceeding with informal inquiry. He has not been officially assigned to this case by CID Pune.

Please note that any interference with closed cases at local level by CID officers acting in personal capacity is not sanctioned.

However, if the officer produces new substantive evidence, standard reopening procedures should be followed.

SP Satara

ATTACHED: Note from Block Development Officer (Received 20th December 2002)

SDM Saheb,

Regarding recommendation on lake fencing and signage:

Sarpanch Talegaon states that fencing the lake is “not acceptable to village sentiment” as the lake has religious significance and fencing would “trap the spirits.”

We are exploring alternative safety measures that are culturally acceptable.

BDO Talegaon Block

ATTACHED: Note from PHC Talegaon (Received 5th January 2003)

SDM Office, Satara Attention: Shri Patwardhan

Subject: Mental Health Outreach Recommendation

Sir, with respect to your memo recommendation regarding superstition awareness program:

I am the newly posted Medical Officer at PHC Talegaon. Upon review of case records from the three Korde Tal incidents, I have questions that go beyond mental health outreach.

I would like to request a meeting to discuss these concerns in person.

Dr. Leena Shirke, MBBS Medical Officer, PHC Talegaon

RESPONSE (Handwritten on Dr. Shirke's note):

Dr. Shirke - Cases are closed. No meeting required. If you have new evidence, submit in writing through proper channel. - RKP

TRUST DEED

Gadkari Family Devasthan Trust

Certified Copy - Excerpt

Registration Reference: Trust Deed No. 1247/1962 **Registered at:** Sub-Registrar Office, Satara **Date of Registration:** 14th November 1962 **Registered by:** Shri Vishwanath Damodar Gadkari (Founder)

Note: This is a partial excerpt obtained from temple records. Full deed available at Sub-Registrar Office upon formal requisition. Excerpt prepared by Temple Trust Committee at request of CID.

RECITALS

WHEREAS the Founder, Shri Vishwanath Damodar Gadkari, son of late Shri Damodar Gadkari, resident of Gadkari Wada, Village Talegaon, Taluka Satara, District Satara, being the owner in possession of various properties hereinafter described, and

WHEREAS the Founder is desirous of creating a trust for religious, charitable, and family purposes for the benefit of the Devasthan (temple) and his family members and descendants, and

WHEREAS the Founder wishes to ensure that certain properties shall be held in trust for specific purposes and beneficiaries as described herein,

NOW THIS DEED WITNESSETH as follows:

ARTICLE I: TRUST PROPERTIES

The following properties are hereby settled upon trust:

Schedule A: Temple Properties [Details of temple land - not relevant to excerpt]

Schedule B: Family Settlement Properties

1. Survey No. 156/A, Village Talegaon, measuring 1.2 hectares (lake-adjacent land)
 2. Survey No. 47/B, Village Wada, measuring 0.8 hectares
 3. Survey No. 89/A and 89/B, Village Talegaon, measuring 0.6 hectares (combined)
 4. One residential structure at Gadkari Wada (servant quarters, north wing)
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ARTICLE II: BENEFICIARIES

Part A: Temple Beneficiaries

[Temple trust beneficiaries - not relevant to excerpt]

Part B: Family Beneficiaries

Primary Beneficiaries (in order of succession):

1. Shri Vishwanath D. Gadkari (Founder) - during his lifetime
2. After Founder, his legitimate son(s) in order of birth
3. After sons, legitimate grandson(s) in order of birth
4. [Standard succession provisions - continues for several generations]

Contingent Beneficiaries:

In the event that any child or descendant of the Founder, whether legitimate or otherwise, is born and acknowledged by the Founder during his lifetime or identified by DNA or blood testing after his death, such child shall be entitled to:

- Equal share in Schedule B properties with other beneficiaries of same generation
- Right of residence at Gadkari Wada
- Monthly maintenance from trust income (amount to be determined by trustees)

Provision for Minor Dependents:

Any minor child of the Founder, whether legitimate or acknowledged, shall have the right to education, maintenance, and wedding expenses from trust funds. The trustees shall ensure such children are protected regardless of circumstances of birth.

ARTICLE III: TRUSTEES

Initial Trustees: 1. Shri Vishwanath D. Gadkari (Founder - Managing Trustee) 2. Shri Ramchandra P. Bhave (Temple Priest) 3. Shri [Name illegible in copy] (Village Elder)

Succession of Trusteeship: After Founder, the eldest living male descendant shall become Managing Trustee. Temple priest position shall carry automatic trusteeship.

ARTICLE IV: TRUST PURPOSES

The properties in Schedule B shall be managed for:

1. Maintenance of temple and religious activities
2. Education of beneficiaries

3. Welfare of acknowledged descendants regardless of legitimacy
 4. Charitable distribution to village poor (10% of annual income)
-

ARTICLE V: RESTRICTIONS

5.1 Alienation Restrictions:

Properties in Schedule B shall NOT be sold, mortgaged, or transferred outside the trust except: - With unanimous consent of all living beneficiaries, OR - By order of competent court

5.2 Beneficiary Protection:

No beneficiary shall be removed from trust benefits except: - By death, OR - By voluntary written renunciation, OR - By order of competent court for proven misconduct

5.3 Amendment Restrictions:

This trust deed may be amended only for: - Addition of newly acknowledged beneficiaries - Administrative procedural changes - NOT for removal of existing beneficiaries without their consent

ARTICLE VI: SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Provision 6.3 (Relevant Excerpt):

In the event that any minor beneficiary dies before attaining majority, their share shall pass to their legal heirs. If no legal heirs exist, the share shall be held in trust for future minor beneficiaries or, in absence thereof, shall be utilized for charitable purposes approved by the temple committee.

Provision 6.5:

If dispute arises regarding beneficiary status, the matter shall be decided by a committee comprising the temple priest, village Sarpanch, and one elder nominated by the Founder's family. DNA testing or other scientific methods may be employed where available and appropriate.

SIGNATURES AND ATTESTATION

[Signature of Founder] [Signature of Witnesses - 2] [Sub-Registrar stamp and signature]

SUBSEQUENT ANNOTATIONS (Temple Record Copy):

Annotation 1 (Undated, handwritten):

| “Regarding property to Mane children - trustees to discuss”

Annotation 2 (Date illegible):

| “Meeting held. V.D.G. confirmed intention. Wife Vasundhara strongly opposed. Matter deferred.”

Annotation 3 (July 1988):

| “Mane children deceased. Matter closed. No further action required on beneficiary question.”

REGISTRAR'S CERTIFICATE

This is a certified true copy of the portion of the deed requested.

Full deed comprises 23 pages. This excerpt covers pages 4-7 and 15-16 only.

For complete deed, formal requisition to be made at Sub-Registrar Office, Satara.

[Seal: Sub-Registrar, Satara] [Date of certification illegible]

NOTE FROM TEMPLE COMMITTEE

Attached to this document:

This deed was stored in temple records since 1962. It was examined by the current priest, Pandit Venkatesh, at the request of the Gadkari family in 1987 when question arose about certain children from the Vasti settlement.

The question was whether these children were covered under Article II Part B of this deed.

Temple committee meeting was held. No formal decision was recorded.

Shortly thereafter, the children in question (twin girls, age 8) died in drowning incident at Korde Tal.

No further discussion has occurred on this matter since 1988.

We provide this excerpt for investigation purposes only. Temple takes no position on interpretation of the deed.

SURVEY DEPARTMENT, MAHARASHTRA

Field Survey Report - FRAGMENT

Recovered Document (Damaged)

Note: This document was recovered from the personal effects of the late Shri Harish Karande. Document shows significant water and fire damage. Many pages missing or illegible. Content reconstructed where possible.

Original Reference: Survey Report/Satara/1985/F-47 **Survey Officer:** Raghav s/o Narayan Nimkar, Survey Clerk Grade II **Survey Period:** March - June 1985

Subject: Boundary Verification and Encroachment Assessment, Talbed Reserve Forest, Babhul Range

[PAGE 1 - PARTIALLY LEGIBLE]

SURVEY OBJECTIVES:

1. Verification of existing boundary markers (pillars) as per 1962 demarcation
2. Assessment of encroachment, if any, on reserved forest land
3. Documentation of current land use in buffer zone (500m from boundary)
4. Recommendation for boundary stone replacement where damaged/missing

SURVEY TEAM:

- Survey Clerk: R. N. Nimkar
 - Assistant: [illegible]
 - Forest Guard: Shri Bhika Jadhav
 - Chainman: [illegible]
-

[PAGE 2 - MOSTLY ILLEGIBLE]

[Heavy water damage - only fragments readable]

...boundary pillar no. 17 found displaced by approximately 23 meters towards [illegible]...

...evidence of recent earthwork observed in grid section F-4 and F-5...

...interviewed local [illegible] who stated that “trucks come at night, government people know”...

...discrepancy between 1962 map and current ground reality significant in sectors...

[PAGE 3 - FIRE DAMAGED]

[Burn marks obscure approximately 60% of page]

ENCROACHMENT OBSERVATIONS:

The following areas show signs of unauthorized activity:

Sector F-4 (Survey No. 112 adjacent): > [burned] ...excavation marks indicating removal of [burned]... > ...approximately 0.4 hectares affected... > [burned] ... talbed sand and soil removed, estimated quantity [burned]... > ...tire tracks consistent with heavy vehicle (truck or earthmover)...

Sector F-5 (Survey No. 118 adjacent): > ...more severe encroachment observed... > ...boundary pillars 19 and 20 completely missing... > [burned] ...local informants state “Sawant saheb” arranges [burned]... > ...forest guard Jadhav appeared reluctant to document this section...

Sector G-2: > [burned]

[Remainder of page illegible]

[PAGE 4 - FRAGMENT ONLY]

[Only bottom portion recovered]

...when confronted with these observations, Forest Range Officer Shri P. K. Bendre advised that “some flexibility is needed for development purposes”...

...officer Bendre stated formal report should focus on routine findings and avoid “creating problems for working people”...

...I have recorded these observations separately as I believe they represent significant violation of Forest Conservation Act 1980...

[PAGE 5 - NEARLY COMPLETE]

FINDINGS SUMMARY:

Based on field observations conducted during the survey period, the following violations of Forest Conservation Act 1980 are documented:

1. Boundary Manipulation:

- 7 boundary pillars found missing (Nos. 14, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 27)
- 4 boundary pillars found displaced (Nos. 15, 16, 18, 22)
- Displacement consistently favors expansion of private holdings into reserved forest

2. Unauthorized Excavation:

- Evidence of talbed (murrum/red soil) removal from Sectors F-4, F-5, and G-2
- Estimated quantity removed: [calculation page missing]
- Activity appears ongoing and organized

3. Involvement of Known Parties:

- Survey No. 112: Registered to Gadkari Estate, reportedly sold to Gokhale family
- Survey No. 118: Registered to Gadkari Estate
- Local information indicates contractor Shri Ajit Sawant coordinates excavation
- Material reportedly transported to kiln area for brick manufacturing

4. Official Awareness:

- Forest Range Officer appears aware of activity
 - Suggested suppression of findings
 - No action taken on previous complaints (verbal, per local sources)
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[PAGE 6 - FRAGMENT]

RECOMMENDATIONS:

[Top portion missing]

...formal demarcation exercise with independent team...

...investigation of revenue records for Survey Nos. 112, 118, and adjacent parcels...

...questioning of Shri Ajit Sawant regarding earthmoving equipment use...

...review of Forest Range Officer Bendre's approval records for land conversion...

[burned]

...I am filing this report with the District Survey Office with request for action. Copy retained personally as [burned]...

[PAGE 7 - MISSING]

[PAGE 8 - HEAVILY DAMAGED]

[Only header and one paragraph readable]

PERSONAL NOTE:

I have been warned by multiple persons to discontinue this investigation. Shri [burned] visited my residence on [date illegible] and stated that “survey clerks who ask too many questions have accidents in the forest.” My family is concerned. However, I believe my duty requires [burned]...

[Remainder illegible or burned]

[PAGES 9-12 - MISSING]

DOCUMENT PROVENANCE NOTE

Added by Dr. Leena Shirke, January 2003:

This document was found by Shri Harish Karande among his deceased children's belongings. According to Harish, his children Neelam and Omkar found this partially burned report in an abandoned forest office building near Babhul in February or March 1995, approximately two weeks before their deaths.

The children had shown interest in the document and asked questions about “government papers” and “forest boundaries” to their teacher.

Harish preserved the document but did not understand its significance. He believed it was connected to why his children went to the forest and subsequently to the lake.

The document author, Raghav Nimkar, died of snakebite in September 1985, approximately three months after completing this survey. His widow Leelabai Nimkar died in 1998, ruled as suicide.

Original document condition: Approximately 40% recoverable. Water damage consistent with lake immersion. Fire damage appears older, possibly from attempted destruction before discarding at forest office.

Document retained for CID investigation. Chain of custody: Harish Karande -> Dr. Leena Shirke -> CID (Arjun Gadkari)
