



Sheela Gowda
It.. Matters

Steidl / Lenbachhaus

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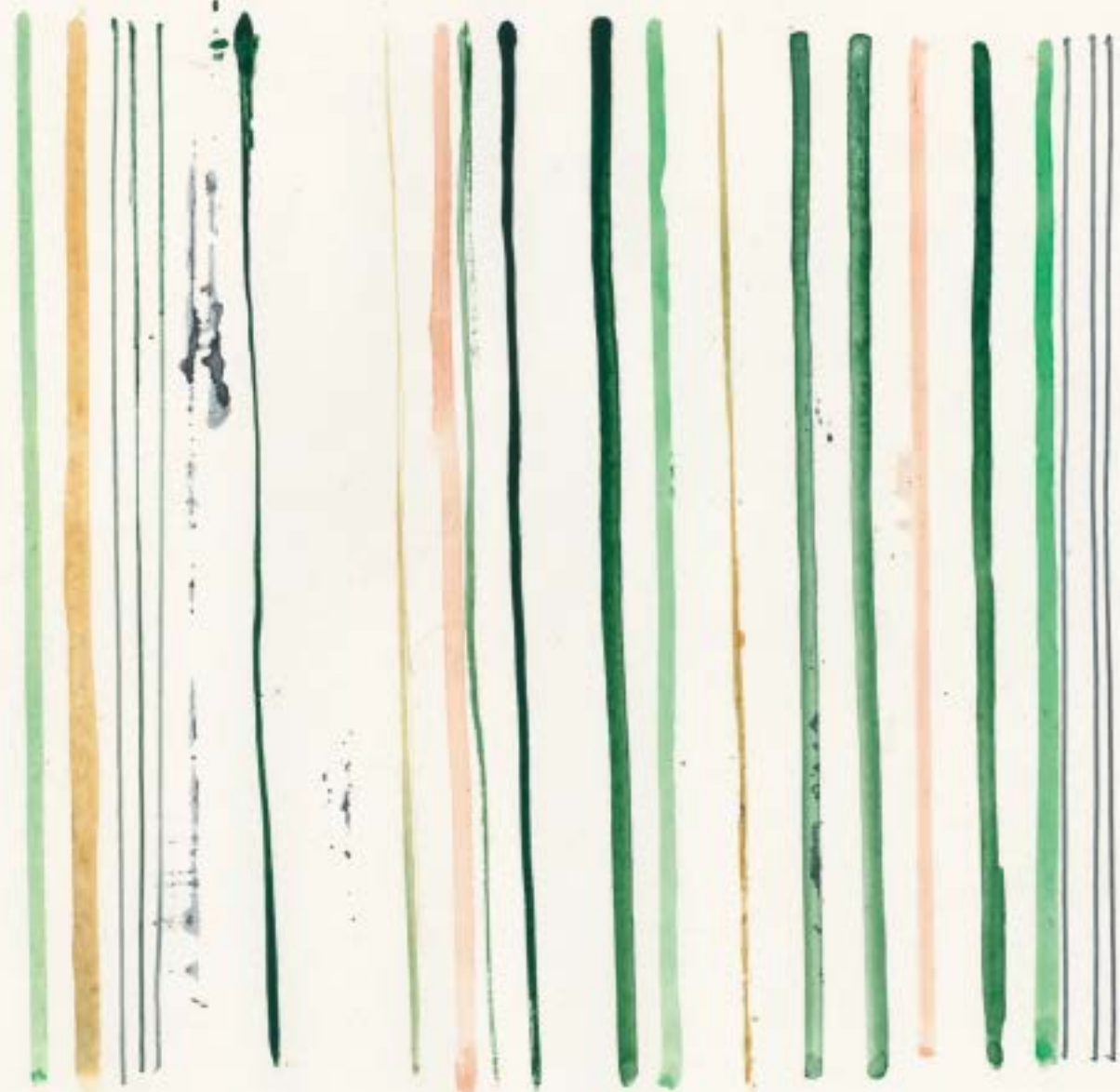
CONSCIENCE

Herausgegeben von / Edited by
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Steidl / Lenbachhaus







FOREST I

Lynching, the scourge of new India

The word lynching is of foreign origin. But this does not mean that mob killings are alien to India



HARSH MANDER

In the years since Narendra Modi was elected in 2014, ugly mob hate has spilled onto the streets, trains and people's homes. Fervent throngs surround, brutally assault and sometimes kill unarmed men, mostly Muslim. The crowds allege that the men had slaughtered cows, or were thieves; but sometimes their only crime — as when a child was stabbed to death on a crowded train near Delhi — is that they are visibly Muslim.

Living in denial

We describe these mob killings as lynching. The initial response of the ruling establishment to criticism of this frightening rising graph of lynching during the Modi regime was one of denial. Both the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ideological mentor, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), claimed that these were simple failures of law and order, ordinary crimes which had ensued under every regime. Vested interests opposed to the leadership of Mr. Modi and the BJP imposed on these statistically insignificant, random and spontaneous crimes a pattern and called these an epidemic of lynching.

However, this defence began to crumble as horrific lynch attacks continued to rock many parts of the country. The second rationalisation, which echoed in television studios each time stories of lynching briefly stirred our public conscience, was that these attacks occurred because Muslims continue to traffic and slaughter cows, cal-

lous to the sentiments of their Hindu neighbours. Hindus, according to this vindication, are understandably provoked. Not normally given to violence, they sometimes cross a line, which is regrettable but natural. Such violence will end only if Muslims and Christians learn to respect the sentiments of the majority Hindu community, and abjure from cow slaughter.

Flaws in the argument

There were many obvious flaws in this argument: Hindus, including Dalits and Adivasis, in many parts of India eat beef; Hindu farmers give up their aged cattle for culling because it is no longer economically viable for them to feed unproductive cattle; Muslim dairy farmers are no less devoted to their cattle than Hindus; in the majority of lynch attacks (such as of Pehlu Khan) the animals are transported for dairying, and not for slaughter; and nothing explains the sudden outbreak of lynching in many corners of the country under the present ruling dispensation (98% of cow-related lynching since 2010 occurred after 2014).

In his annual Dussehra address, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat felt compelled to provide more compelling explanations; therefore he spoke expansively about lynching. Because of the enormous influence which the RSS wields on BJP governments, the words of the RSS head must be held to close scrutiny.

He made five main points. The first is that lynching is a foreign Biblical practice, alien to Indian traditions. The second is that Indians are culturally non-violent. The third is that the RSS has no role in these lynch attacks, and tries to prevent these. The fourth is that many ordinary crimes are wrongly portrayed as lynching. And last that the law should be streng-



thened, if necessary, to ensure those guilty of these crimes are punished. Let me consider each of these in turn.

There indeed is no word for lynching in most Indian languages (except in Bengali — *ganadholai* — possibly because Kolkata for many years witnessed lynching of pickpockets). But Mr. Bhagwat's claim that lynching is a practice created by religions whose 'sacred book is written outside India' conforms to the customary RSS bigotry against Christian and Muslim religions, demonising their beliefs. The example he picks from the Bible in fact is one which seeks to teach love and compassion, not hate. Jesus tells a crowd bent on stoning an adulterous woman — 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.'

Word origins

The word lynching in fact originated in the United States in the mid-18th century. Historians believe that the term was first used by planter Charles Lynch to describe extra-judicial authority assumed by private individuals like him. It came to be applied over time to extra-judicial killings by crowds, most commonly of African-Americans in the late 19th century.

Although the word lynching is of foreign origin, this does not

mean that mob killings are alien to India. Single women have frequently been lynched through the centuries, branded as witches. Dalits have been lynched with enormous cruelty for millennia. Jhajjar, Khairlanji and Una are just three recent sites of ghastly lynching of Dalits. In recent years, Dalits have been lynched for growing a moustache, riding a horse, or building a two-storey home.

Mr. Bhagwat's claim that Indians are culturally non-violent and their culture promotes peaceful coexistence also does not stand up to historical or contemporary scrutiny. The example he offers, that disputes over water were settled amicably by adversaries through dialogue is a cruel joke, because many of the most gruesome lynch attacks on Dalits have occurred when they have simply sought a share of water, even today. It was to draw water from a public lake that B.R. Ambedkar had to wage a powerful public agitation.

Right's connection

But perhaps the most brazen untruth is Mr. Bhagwat's contention that the RSS has nothing to do with lynch attacks, and contrarily prevent them. In more than 31 journeys to lynching sites with the Karwan e Mohabbat, I have found no lynching which is spontaneous, nor any in which anyone, least of all RSS members, have tried to prevent the lynching. The vigilantes make no secret of their adherence to hard-line violent Hindutva beliefs; and victims of lynching are most often Muslims who are sometimes forced to recite 'Jai Shri Ram'. In a strict technical sense, their membership of the RSS cannot be proved, as there is no public record of the formal adherents of the RSS. Just as Nathuram Godse may not have been a

formal member of the RSS at the time he assassinated Mahatma Gandhi; but this cannot obscure the reality that Godse and the vigilantes were driven by Hindu supremacist ideologies of the RSS.

Mr. Bhagwat's fourth claim that many lynchings are ordinary crimes are an older rationalisation, deliberately obscuring the character of lynching as hate crimes that target people because of their identity. It cannot be a coincidence that 86% of people killed in cow-related attacks are Muslim.

The final avowal by Mr. Bhagwat of the need for tougher laws to bring lynch mobs to justice carries little credibility, because the majority of these attacks occur in BJP-ruled States, and existing laws are more than sufficient to secure justice against the attackers. Instead, almost without exception, police administrations in all these States exert to protect the killers, and criminalise the victims.

Mr. Bhagwat, in these ways, relies on many old RSS tropes — demonising 'foreign religions' for advocating violence; characterising Indian culture as intrinsically peaceable; and releasing the RSS from responsibility in instigating, organising and valorising this violence; and State governments from failures to prevent lynching and ensuring justice.

It is hardly surprising lynching survivors can draw no solace, security or healing from his declarations. His words are arid in compassion, displaying neither acknowledgement nor remorse. There seems no early end therefore to the long dark night of hate and fear that has been unleashed by lynching, the scourge of new India.

Harsh Mander is a human rights worker, writer and teacher



tion are the very weapons used to undermine its foundations. Rarely do foundational threats to Constitutions come as sudden events, they often build up as liberties and freedoms are incrementally compromised. We are now perilously close to a moment where this is true of the Constitution of India as well.

From the perspective of the rule of law enshrined in the Constitution, it would be naïve to think that Dadri happened overnight. It is important to confront the same manner in which rights are protected in this country and the ease with which the state can trample upon liberties and freedoms. Worse, Dadri is also a stark reminder of the extent to which we have surrendered our rights to the state. At the heart of Mohammad Akhlaq's lynching is a group that has violently asserted a claim not to be offended, a legal regime that, through anti-cow slaughter laws, has given legitimacy to this claim, and a society that has allowed the state to chip away at the liberty of its people over the decades.

'Being offended' has emerged as an extremely effective ground for curtailing liberties and freedoms. Not only does 'being

Naïve's fire, Taslima Nasrin's *Lajja*, or the latest round of objections to the play *Agnes of God* — invoking this idea of 'being offended' as the basis to restrict rights cannot be considered legitimate for some and illegitimate for others. The more we invoke this idea of 'offence' and maintain our silence when it is invoked, the more we legitimise it. The result of legitimising this idea of 'offence' is that sections of society come to believe that they have a 'right not to be offended'. And when this imagined right is seen as being infringed upon by some members of the society, there is an increasing tendency to enforce it through violence. Our disappointing reactions to the cold-blooded murders of rationalists like Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare and M.M. Kalburgi

the Indian state — a whole lot of information about the state — information without any rights to access. Unfortunately, to be offended is a legal adjudication, a stamp of approval, giving the state the authority to restrict the sale of the Jain festival, for example. The butchers in that state, the sentiments of a part of the society". That consideration has no constitutional basis and today we find ourselves burdened with this decision that govern-

vast machinery — be it in Nellie, Delhi, Bhagalpur or Gujarat — has seen far too little legal and political accountability. As a society and a legal system, we have often sent out the message that the most inhumane and cruel forms of violence will be forgiven and forgotten.

Primatur of law and courts

The story of the banning of cow slaughter and the restrictions on the consumption of beef follow a very similar trajectory. Different States have different provisions on cow slaughter in terms of the kind of cattle that can be slaughtered (if at all) and when they can be slaughtered in terms of their utility in agriculture. While State legislation in the 1950s imposed a complete ban on slaughter of cows and a partial ban on slaughter of bulls, the scope of the ban has increased over the decades. Relatively recent pieces of legislation like those in Gujarat (amended in 1994), Madhya Pradesh (2011), and Maharashtra (2015) contain a complete prohibition on the slaughter of cows, bulls and bullocks.

While the Supreme Court, in its early judgments on such laws, was clear that a

As we desperately look for explanations following the brutal killing of Mohammad Akhlaq, we have to start by acknowledging that we have given up too much, questioned too little and stayed silent for far too long













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the data be furnished along with an affidavit containing a certificate from the system analyst or the authorised person of the company.

Road accident
The woman was allegedly raped by Sengar in 2017, when she was a minor. She was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences here after getting seriously injured in a road accident in which the hand of the former MLA is suspected.

The court has already framed charges against the MLA, representing Bangermau in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, and put him on trial.

of now, it was not known whether the data was stored or not, and if yes, where and whether it was available.

The company counsel further said they were yet to take a decision on the format in which the data, if

BJP MLA booked for murder over collision
U.P. govt. recommends CBI probe

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

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Earlier in the day, jailed BJP MLA from Unnao Kuldeep Singh Sengar, who faces charges of gang rape, was booked for criminal conspiracy and murder in connection with the accident in which the survivor and her

Kuldeep Singh Sengar. •ANI

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CONGRESS'S PLEA PAGE 11

Murder most foul
A brief timeline of the Hyderabad veterinarian murder case

Nov. 27: Four persons abduct the woman veterinarian from the Tondupalli toll plaza in Hyderabad

Nov. 28: The woman's charred body is found at an underpass near Chatanpalli in Shadnagar. The victim's father identifies the remains

Nov. 29: Police arrest Md. Arif, Jollu Naveen, Jollu Siva and Ch. Chennakeshavulu, all natives of Narayanpet district

Nov. 30: Protests break out in Shadnagar town as the accused are brought to the police station before being presented before the

They refused to surrender: CoP
Arif and Chennakeshavulu snatched pistols from the police at the crime scene'

STAFF REPORTER
CHATANPALLI

Lorry driver Mohammed Arif, 26, was the first to open fire on police personnel from the snatched pistol, and the police retaliated only after repeated warnings, said Cyberabad Commissioner of Police V.C. Sajjanar here on Friday.

Speaking to mediapersons, Mr. Sajjanar said the policemen had escorted the accused to the scene of offence after they confessed to their crime and claimed they had thrown away the victim's mobile phone, power bank, watch and other items in the nearby grove.

team, often changing their version once they reached the spot and a few minutes later, they attacked our men with stones and sticks before snatching two pistols from these include resisters.

Asked how Arif and Chennakeshavulu managed to open fire as the firearms were usually locked, the police officer claimed that the weapons were unlocked at the time.

"We repeatedly warned them, asked them to surrender. Since they opened fire, we had to retaliate in self-defence," Mr. Sajjanar said, adding that the law had done its duty.

Warangal on December 10. Mr. Sajjanar, then headed the probe.

Soon, three more — S. Srinivas, D. Samudra and P. Hari Krishna, were arrested. Three days later, they were killed when they tried to snatched a pistol during the attack.

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A similar shootout in 2008

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HYDERABAD

Friday's incident brings to memory an incident of 2008 when V.C. Sajjanar was probing an acid attack case. Swapnika and T. Pranitha, electrical engineers, were attacked by two students.

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They got the punishment they deserved: parents
Justice done, say Disha's neighbours

M.L. MELLY MAITREYI
HYDERABAD

The gated community where the family of Disha resides in Shamshabad area was a scene of solemn jubilation on Friday as residents woke up to the news of the killing of the four accused in an exchange of fire with the police.

Residents said Friday morning brought some justice and peace to Disha's soul.

For the grief-stricken family members, the news seemed to bring a sense of closure.

"Our daughter will not come back but the perpetrators of the crime got the punishment they deserved," Disha's parents said.

'More steps needed'
Disha's father said the death of the accused brought some solace but more awareness should be generated about safety measures, helplines and apps.

"My daughter was not aware that she could dial 100 or any other number to seek help. We bought our apartment and moved here four years ago and my daughter used to travel regularly up to Gachibowli on her two-wheeler and return home. She did not realise the accused, who offered to fix the flat tyre of her scooter, had a sinister motive," he said.

The convicted, Vinay Sharma, is on death row along with Mukesh and Akshay Kumar Singh, who did not file mercy pleas.

"The Home Ministry has sent the file to President of India where Delhi government has recommended that Sharma's mercy plea be rejected," the senior official said.

"I don't know how many rights the killers of my daughters have, because every time I have been told that they [convicts] cannot be

hanged because of the rights they enjoy. After Nirbhaya incident, the law was amended, but victims are still wandering for justice

A couple of lanes into the village, which is home to around 1,200 people, is the house of Jollu Shiva. His mother Jollu Manemma says the exchange of fire was a case of "cheating". "We said we would burn him. But tell me, are the police not educated? How can you justify this killing? Why was he killed in this manner without anyone's knowledge? We will just leave his body (and not perform the last rites)," she says.

Jollu Naveen's parents were not home.

A 10-minute drive from Gudigandla leads to Jakkulare. This is where prime accused Mohammed Arif's parents live in their single-room dwelling.

Villagers say Arif's parents, Hussain and Molan Bee, are engaged in agricultural work.

Arif's mother says, "I heard from others that he was killed. I don't know anything. He just came home one day and said that the lorry was being driven and that a woman died. He told us to go to sleep and then he slept. The police came after midnight and they took him away. Who will feed me now?"

Unredemptable diversity
Central to this seemingly everlasting Hindu immersion is the deep

as a *sonant*, an adherent of a way of life that started long, long ago but, unlike the ancient that is dead and gone, continues to live today.

These dismal numbers suggest that the economic distance away from posting a strong re-growth and it may be too soon to predict a deli-

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U.P. rape survivor injured in accident

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The survivor of the Unnao gangrape in which BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar, now jailed, is an accused was seriously injured on Sunday after a truck hit the car she was travelling in with her relatives and lawyer.

The sister said the rape survivor, her two aunts and their lawyer Mahendra Singh were in the car, when it met with the accident in Rae Bareilly district.

The aunts succumbed to their injuries, while the rape survivor and her lawyer were seriously injured, while her two aunts were killed when a truck rammed the car they were travelling in.

was raining at that time, the officer said.

The truck which collided with the car, while driving on the wrong side of the road, had its number plate smeared with black paint, fuelling suspicion.

The rape survivor's sister suspected foul-play and alleged that the accident was a 'conspiracy' to eliminate the witnesses and family. She demanded a CBI probe into the accident, calling it murder.

"It's a conspiracy. A man is sitting inside jail and gets such things done. The administration is not doing anything," she told *The Hindu* over phone.

She alleged that Mr. Sengar, an MLA from Bangermau in Unnao, was trying to eliminate the witnesses so that "there is nobody left to run around for the case".

UP DGP O.P. Singh said the rape survivor and the lawyer were out of danger. He said the accident did not appear like a "case of conspiracy or intent to murder" but a probe was on.

The truck was seized and its driver arrested, Mr. Singh said.

Unnao rape victim succumbs to burns

Save me, I want to stay alive, she had pleaded with doctors at Safdarjung Hospital

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The 23-year-old Unnao rape survivor, who was airlifted to Delhi and admitted to the Safdarjung Hospital after she was set on fire by five persons on Thursday, succumbed to her injuries on Friday night.

Dr. Shalabh Kumar, HOD (burns and plastic), Safdarjung Hospital, said, "She suffered cardiac arrest at 11.10 p.m. and we tried to resuscitate her, but she could not survive and at 11.40 p.m. she died."

Dr. Kumar said that petrol had been used by the assailants to set her on fire and as a result she suffered 90% burns. The woman's mother, sister and brother were in the hospital and have been informed, he added.

On Thursday, the woman was airlifted to Delhi from a hospital in Lucknow for further treatment. She was attacked outside Sindupur village in Unnao district in Uttar Pradesh when she was

on her way to a court in Rae Bareilly to attend a hearing in the rape case.

During the treatment, she told doctors at Safdarjung repeatedly not to let the accused go free. She asked the doctors if she would make it out alive and pleaded with them, "Save me...I want to live."

Medical Superintendent of the hospital, Dr. Sunil Gupta, said: "She was conscious when she was brought here last night at 8 p.m. and was speaking, though very feebly."

The hospital had set up a dedicated ICU for the patient and a team of doctors was constantly monitoring her health condition, he added.

Great relief, says Nirbhaya's mother

Hyderabad police have set an example by killing rape accused, she says

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

The Hyderabad police have set an example and the Delhi police should follow them to prevent cases of crime against women in the National Capital, said Nirbhaya's mother on Thursday.

"I got to know about the killing of four rape accused by the Hyderabad police through TV channels after one of my friends called to inform me about the development. And the news has brought a great relief to me that at least someone has delivered justice immediately. At least one daughter has been served justice. But my daughter is still waiting for justice," said the mother.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs has sent to President Ram Nath Kovind the Delhi government's recommendation to reject the mercy plea of one of the convicts in the 2012 Delhi gang-rape and murder of a 23-year-old paramedic student, a government official said.

The convicted, Vinay Sharma, is on death row along with Mukesh and Akshay Kumar Singh, who did not file mercy pleas.

"The Home Ministry has sent the file to President of India where Delhi government has recommended that Sharma's mercy plea be rejected," the senior official said.

"I support the brave act done by the Hyderabad police. The decision taken by them is the best decision any police officer can take against rape accused," said the mother.



Cyberabad Commissioner of Police V.C. Sajjanar.



Neighbours tying rakhis on police personnel in Hyderabad on Friday. •ANI



The slain accused. •ANI



Police personnel at the site where a rape victim was allegedly set ablaze by five men in Unnao district on Thursday. •PTI













al elephants in the room [are]: the to wait and watch. We saw that, for in- splurge to end the slowdown we are on track to reachi

Lynching concept alien to India, says Bhagwat

He said no one ought to indulge in violence, however provocative be a gesture or action that might have taken place.

According to him, India's cultural tradition, which was unique in the world, had always been one of acceptance of all communities and castes and that RSS activists had been raised in the values of this tradition.

"There are reports of people of one community inflicting violence on the other. However, the reverse is equally true. Moreover, there are cases where a certain community is incited and what has actually occurred is deliberately twisted," said Mr. Bhagwat.

He charged that certain selfish powers were distorting facts to aggravate social tensions. The RSS chief said there were those in the country who could not tolerate India's growing weight in the world and the increasing respect being accorded to it and hence, were bent upon destroying the fabric of its unity.

Underscoring the strong tradition of democracy in the country, the RSS chief said the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections were a sign of its solidity. "Democracy was not a concept bequeathed to us by Western countries, but it has had a rich tradition in India and has been prevalent since time immemorial," he remarked.

Lauding the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the withdrawal of Article 370, he said: "This [BJP-led NDA] government has proved it has the will to take bold decisions as exemplified by its withdrawal of Article 370. And it did not just steamroll the Bill, but passed it in both houses of Parliament with the consent of all parties."

Commenting on the Chandrayaan-2 mission to the Lunar South Pole, Mr. Bhagwat said that while it may not have been a complete success, it drew the world's attention and show-



Mohan Bhagwat

cased India's scientific prowess.

"No one dared to launch this mission but our Indian scientists. The world applauded this effort and the event instilled pride in the hearts of ordinary citizens," said Mr. Bhagwat. Dismissing fears of a recession, he said that it did not have too much impact on India as the ordinary citizen always had a habit of saving.

Unacceptable: Congress Senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said, "The issue is not Europe or India, English or Hindi. The killing of innocent, hapless people by agitated mobs is unacceptable to humanity. Languages don't matter."

"I demand that you clarify in India's national interests and global perception, whether you endorse or condemn such killing of innocent men, women and children by mobs. Please come clean on this in India's national interest," he added.

While favouring the Centre's decision to give a boost to foreign direct investment (FDI), he qualified it by remarking that increasing the FDI limits and privatisation was beneficial only if measures were carrying out keeping the country's interests in mind.

"A 'swadeshi' is someone who lives in a globalised economy but only on conditions that favor India. If something can be produced in my country, why will I buy it from any other place and thus ruin my domestic trade?" said Mr. Bhagwat.

He further explained that a 'swadeshi' would only buy a commodity from outside the country if it is an absolute necessity.

tie 370 in a single stroke. The people of Maharashtra must vote with that in mind in this election," Mr. Shah said.

Quick decision

Speaking at the annual Dasa rally at Savargaon in Patoda taluka, he said Mr. Modi had fulfilled the aspirations of those who voted the party to victory with over 300 seats in the Lok Sabha election. Following this, the Modi government only took five

months to remove Article 370. "The work pending for the past 70 years was completed in less than five months of this government. This achievement of Modi must be taken to every household for the Maharashtra election," Mr. Shah told the large gathering.

The BJP president highlighted the work done by the party for the OBCs, citing the backward classes commission and several development schemes for them.

Jhansi youth killed in fake encounter: family

Magisterial probe ordered in case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

The killing of a youth in an alleged police encounter in Jhansi took a political turn after his family and the Samajwadi Party accused the Uttar Pradesh police of murdering him.

Pushendra Yadav was cremated by the police on Monday night after his family refused to take the body till a murder case is lodged against the officer who shot him. Additional Superintendent of Police, Jhansi, Rahul

Mithas said the body was cremated in the presence of a magistrate after the family refused to receive it till as late as 8 p.m. on Monday.

"The body was decomposing," Mr. Mithas said.

The family members have been sitting in protest after Pushendra was shot dead by the police on the intervening night of October 5 and 6. A magisterial probe has been ordered. "If anyone is guilty, we will act against them," said Jhansi SSP Om Prakash Singh.

Eminent people speak out against F

They ask how writing an open letter to the PM can be called 'an act of sedition'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Over 180 eminent people, including actor Naseeruddin Shah, cinematographer Anand Pradhan, historian Romila Thapar and activist Harsh Mander, have condemned the FIR filed against 49 eminent citizens in Muzaffarpur, Bihar for writing to the Prime Minister highlighting the rise of mob lynchings in the country.

In a new letter, they questioned how writing an open letter to the Prime Minister could be called "an act of sedition".

"An FIR has been lodged against forty-nine of our colleagues in the cultural community, simply because they performed their duty as re-



Romila Thapar

spected members of civil society. They wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister, expressing concern about mob lynching in our country. Can this be called an act of sedition? Or is harassment by misusing the courts a ploy to silence citizens' voices?"

the letter read. The signatories included writers Ashok Vajpeyi and Jerry Pinto, academic Ira Bhaskar, poet Jeet Thayil, author Shamsul Islam, musician T.M. Krishna and filmmaker-activist Saba Dewan. They said they would continue to speak up against silencing of "people's voices".

Tharoor's plea

Congress Lok Sabha member Shashi Tharoor on Tuesday shared a letter he had sent to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Twitter, in which he asked the Prime Minister to take a "public stand" to welcome dissent and expressed his "strong protest" over the FIR against 49 eminent citizens who had

gress Party leader. The rally was on several occasions. Munde's support mandated she be chief ministerial feel she is the date for the chair post while taking Gopinath Munde Piyush Khape, said, adding work harder and depend on sentiment of her late achieving elector

Ms. Munde is contesting the election from the Parli constituency in Beed where she faces a close fight from Dhananjay Munde, a cousin and senior Nationalist Con-

Priyanka to n

Congress State unit was revamped

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra, who is the party in-charge of eastern Uttar Pradesh, is expected to meet the newly appointed office-bearers next week as the party has revamped its State unit.

Apart from appointing Ajay Kumar Lallu as the State president, the party appointed four vice-presidents and 12 general secretaries in the State unit.

A new 18-member advisory council has been set up to

advise the general while an elect working group and planning formed.

Ms. Vadra is visit the State and spend a couple of days getting feedback on new office-bearers sign responsibility meetings are in she seems set to the party in-charge U.P. as the C attempts a political the crucial State Party insiders

raised concern lynching.

Mr. Tharoor Prime Minister ensure the nation of commitment to uphold of expression when it involves ment with you of vernment", and him that "India's an independent would have been one if those who under the British shown the courage

"In the Naya B you have promise tion, are FIRs go filed every time critical of the gove its policies," Mr. asked.

(With P





Hounded Social workers and Muslim leaders meet at Ansari's home in Kadamdia village after the lynching; (right) a protest march in Kolkata; (facing page) Tabrez Ansari. BISHWAKARAN/ROUT & RAJEEV BHATT

OFF-CENTRE

Land of blood and shame

The lynch mob, the doctors, the magistrate and jail staff, they all share the guilt of Tabrez Ansari's death

HARSH MANDER

A long gruesome video seared mobile phones across the country last June, briefly stirring the conscience of an otherwise benumbed nation. It showed a young man in Jharkhand, tied to a pole, screaming piteously as villagers took turns to beat him with sticks.

Two months after his lynching, I joined a team from Karwan e Mohabbat – a solidarity group committed to fighting rising hate – to visit the young man's family in Seraikela-Kharsawan, share their grief, and express our shame. The story that emerged lays bare the many fault-lines in our land, some old, some new, its cruelties, and the way it mercilessly crushes hope and possibilities for its most vulnerable people.

In the video, when the mob asks the boy his name, he first replies, "Sonu". When they beat him more, he says he is Tabrez Ansari. "A Muslim," someone says, beating him more. The crowd forces him to recite Jai Shri Ram and Jai Hanuman. Even this recitation does not eventually save his life.

Tabrez lost both parents at a very young age. He was raised by his uncles, who pulled him out of school and sent him to apprentice in a garage one of them owned. He was 15, and he trained to be a welder. At 16, he set out to find his place in the world. He travelled to Pune, where he did many odd jobs, finding regular work eventually in garages. He would return home every Eid.

When he turned 22, he decided he must marry to fill the loneliness of his life. His uncles found an 18-year-old girl, Shahista, in one of the poorest homes in the neighbourhood. Her father was drunk most of the time; her mother toiled tirelessly to bring some money home. She had educated her daughter till Class 10. She thought marriage was a way for her daughter to escape her drunken father and otherwise hopeless destitution. Tabrez's uncles said the boy was an orphan and would seek no dowry.

The family showed us pictures of the wedding on their mobile phone. The girl's mother had borrowed money for the festivities. Tabrez is glowing with happiness in his dapper black-buttoned coat. There is a rosebud pinned to his lapel.

After their marriage, he resolved to take his bride to Pune, but first wanted to hire a room and set it up for her. The morning after he was lynched, he would have left with Shahista for Pune. Their train tickets were booked, their suitcases packed. Two months later, when we met his mother-in-law she wept that his suitcase still stood packed. They had not had the heart to unpack it.

It was midsummer, on June 18, 2019. Since he was to leave the next morning with his wife to Pune, Tabrez had gone to seek the blessings of his father's sister. For this, he had taken a lift from two friends who were travelling in the same direction. The three sat on the same motorcycle.

Rescue call

It was late evening when they were returning home. He had called Shahista, assuring her he should be home in half an hour. But he never came back. When she called his phone, there was no answer. Despite their mounting panic, the family had no option but to wait. Around 6:00 in the morning, Tabrez finally called, weeping. He said he had been trapped by a crowd at a village 6 km away, Dhatkidih, and he begged them to come to his rescue.

Shahista and her mother rushed to the home of Tabrez's uncle, a maulana. The three hurried to the village. There they saw Tabrez still tied to a pole, almost unconscious, his head and body bloodied. They learnt later that when the crowd had accosted the three as they were returning the previous night, his two friends had escaped on the motorcycle, leaving Tabrez to the crowd. Those two have still not returned home, probably scared that they too will meet the same fate as Tabrez.

Tabrez's uncle, wife and mother-in-law were too frightened to confront

the still frenzied crowd and rescue him. They returned home, desperately trying to round up a crowd to go back with them. But by 8 a.m., word came that Tabrez had been taken to the police station.

The three then rushed there, but the constable blocked their entry. The women wept and begged, and he finally took them to Tabrez, whom they found stretched on a mat on the floor of the police lockup. His head was bandaged, and his clothes and body bloodied. They managed to take a picture of him. They learnt later that his skull and many bones had been fractured.

But the police took him to a local health facility, where doctors only bandaged his head.

Tabrez was obviously in unbearable pain. He pleaded for water which the police refused. His uncle, the maulana, pleaded to be allowed to take the boy to hospital, and promised that they would return him to the police after he had been treated. The police refused, saying that if the family had so much sympathy for a thief, they could join him in the lockup. The only concession they finally allowed was to permit them to buy him bottled water and biscuits.

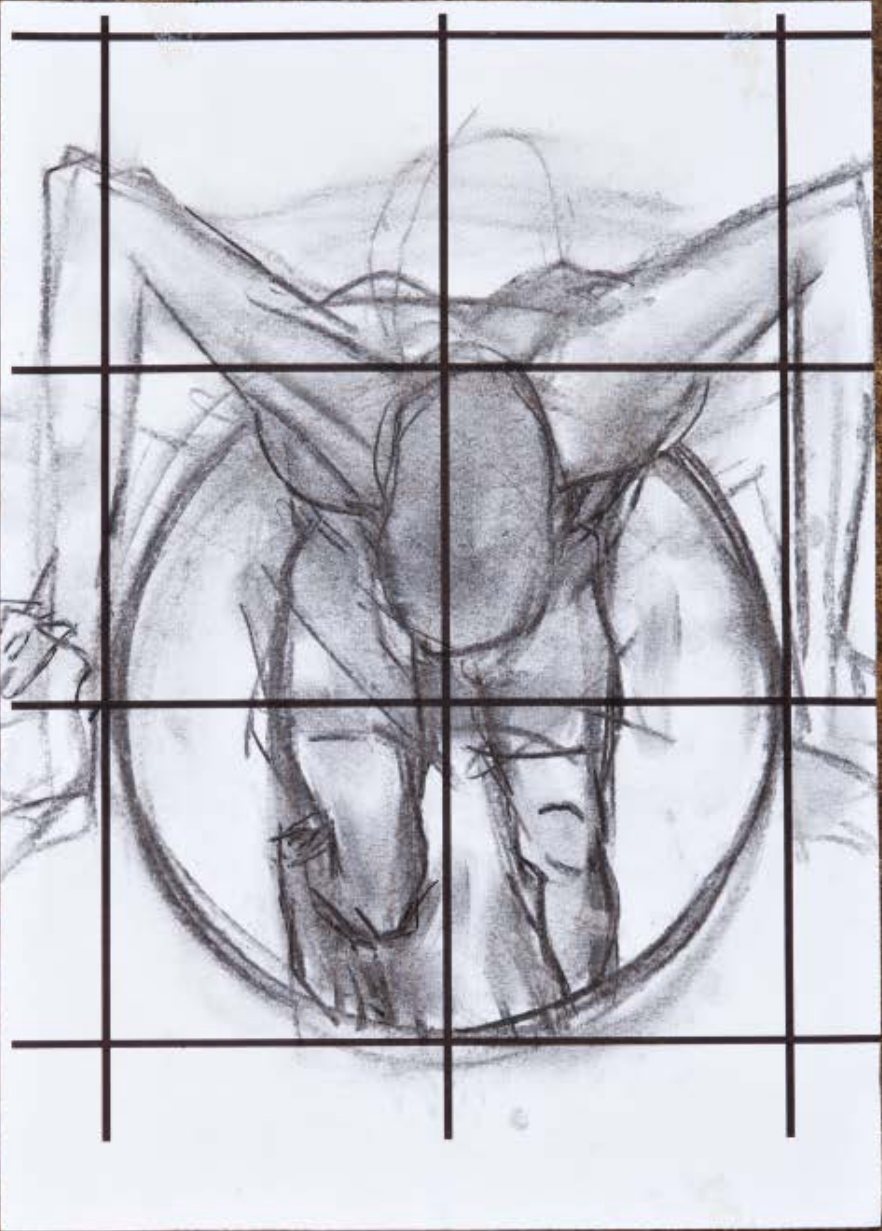
Back in jail

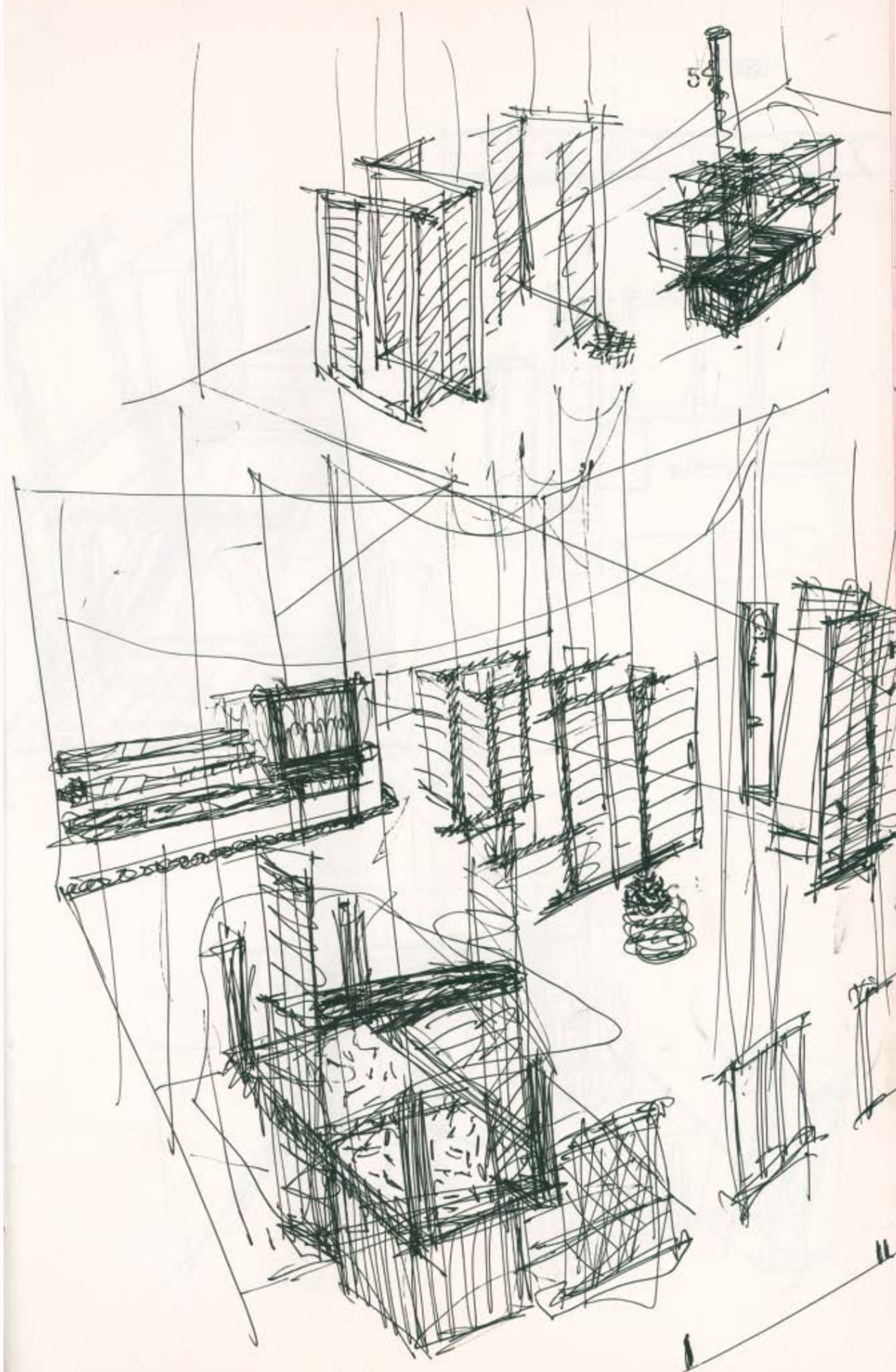
When they returned the next morning, they learnt that Tabrez had been shifted to jail again. There, they saw him for 10 minutes through a glass screen, and spoke to him over an intercom. He wept, asking them to get him out at all costs. His mother-in-law said she could not bear his cries for help, and put down the receiver. This was the last they would see him alive.

The family, although very poor, pooled all it could to hire a lawyer. He told them he would "study the case". But two days later, Tabrez had died in custody.

The police registered a complaint

There were no complaints of theft in the village, so they wrote in the charge-sheet that he 'intended to steal'









Out of focus portraits of Tirupathi
returned bald heads with
sculptural pieces of hair loops.
Photographed at Venkatappa Art Gallery.
Art pilgrims!











George S. Patton (left)

However, the elders in the village have not much information on when exactly it all started and they only know that David Muli was a full Saint who had the "power" to solve the problems of the people.

Local Correspondence

in the past 30 years India has proved it. With 300 million-strong middle class, a young work force and a solid knowledge base the country presently well placed among the galaxy of nations," said Dr. Huxman delivering the P. T. Agawar Memorial Lecture here on Thursday. "India is on the threshold of great glory. We should cherish it."

the first, rather unshowed, unnoticed one starting in the 1980s – and the latter was not under any sort of compulsion. 'The first set of reforms went unnoticed. It was a half-hearted approach and the existing political opinion did not favour it,' he said. The second set of reforms, initiated in the early 90s, was due to economic crisis but the ongoing third round of reforms had come from within,' he said.

Chandrasekhar Gupta

It would be rather unlikely for a non-swimmers blind to carry a handkerchief for the idea really is to blow one's nose in the wind for the politicians for in the brown, using a handkerchief for this purpose is the only way to avoid any damage to the self. A washed handkerchief in the pocket is dirt. Not wet garbage outside one's door. It is perfectly alright to skirt around such risk and not be offended at their sight. Once such substances are out of the way, the new rule is plain, not waste on luxury items.

is not there, it is a book having no notion of dirt, except that it is different from the way it is viewed in the West and in medieval books. Most of it does not realize that every civilization has its own understanding of both dirt and beauty, strange as it may sound to outsiders. As the ideology of nationalism across religious divides in the subconscious, it is not appreciating that Puritan magazine should have found so much dirt in its books.

A Hindu would be amazed at how European politicians can be in the West. What, after all, does any world one's home have to do with one's good?

EVERYTHING CONTRIBUTES IN THE
PERSONALITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL
... ALSO SHOES"

Self-Monitoring

ROOR: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh should apologise to the nation for the "wrong" statements in the affidavit filed before the court regarding the Basmah Beito, and Vidushi Hinda Parashar general secretary, Pravara Trust.

Talking to media persons on Monday, Mr. Tagore said that the government was making the officials of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) scapegoats in the issue.

The Union Cabinet had collective responsibility in carrying out its policies, he added.

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The project, in its proposed form, would subject the lives of over four lakh fishermen and the rich thorium deposits in the area would be lost.

Mr. Tognoli said that two regional parties that were constituents of the United Progressive Alliance, had persons here on Sunday. MP leader demanded the Centre apologise for stand on the issue.

Punish real culprits: women's groups

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: In an open letter, a number of women's groups and concerned citizens have signed a petition calling for the total renunciation of the 1949 Hindu Marriage Act, for perjury in the New York case and demanded action against the "real culprits" behind the 2002 Gujarat carnage.

Several members of her family were killed in the attack on the Red Bakery in Tashkent in March 2002. After a fast-track trial in Golestan, acquired at the second, Gafurov moved the National Human Rights Commission and the Supreme Court for a retrial claiming that she exonerated the guilty during her testimony because she had been threatened.

Later, Zahra claimed that she was coerced by social activist Tarek Sobah into denouncing a retrial. It was in dismissing this claim that the apex court found her guilty of contempt and sentenced her to one-year "house arrest" by means, but that does not mean that she should go to jail since she could not bear the multiple burdens of social and health placed solely upon her, says the *Washington Post*.

in a bid to give investors a sense of the value of the company's assets. "It's not surprising in a volatile global market that companies in a world where a handful of companies control the market are looking for ways to protect their assets," says a senior analyst at Moody's. Moreover, each hedge adds further the amount of "diversity" driven by the consumption of the stock. Tax breaks at the top end of the scale make it more attractive to hedge. "It's a good idea to hedge, but it's not a magic bullet," says a senior analyst at Moody's. "There are no silver bullets, a few are better than none held and be the second choice." "There are no silver bullets," says a senior analyst at Moody's. "There are no silver bullets, a few are better than none held and be the second choice." "There are no silver bullets, a few are better than none held and be the second choice." "There are no silver bullets, a few are better than none held and be the second choice."

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Dr. Patricia Ambrose

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»Kunst ist eine Frage der Perspektive«

Eva Huttenlauch

»Die Durchfahrt von der engen zur weiten Welt ist stürmisch«
—Rabindranath Tagore *Das Heim und die Welt*

Sheela Gowda wurde 1957 in Bhadravati in Südindien geboren. Ihre grundgebende Bildungsphase fiel in die 1970er und 1980er Jahre, eine Zeit also, in der Indien sich mehr transformierte als zuvor in Jahrhunderten. An diesem Schnittpunkt zweier Epochen erlebte sie Indien zweifach: die Bildungstraditionen eines alten Kulturlandes mit ihren bewahrenden Wirkungen auf die Gemeinschaft sowie den unerbittlich vorandrängenden Impetus einer entgrenzten Weltökonomie mit seinen auch kulturellen Auswirkungen, innerhalb derer ein materieller wie kultureller Selbstbehauptungskampf das Leben jedes einzelnen betrifft. In dieser Krise eines langen geschichtlichen Kontinuums ideeller Bindungen und überkommener Sinnordnungen galt es für Sheela Gowda, sich eine eigene persönliche und besondere künstlerische Position zu bestimmen.

Ihr Karrierebeginn verlief durchaus regelmäßig in den vorgegebenen Bahnen zunächst asiatisch-indischer, dann auch europäischer Künftlerausbildung. Als Siebzehnjährige erhielt sie 1974 ihre erste Einführung in künstlerisches Denken an der 1968 gegründeten Ken School of Art in Bengaluru, die sie 1979 mit einem Diplom des Schulgründers R.M. Hadapad (1936–2003) abschloss. Er lehrte seine Schüler, jederzeit offenen Auges und in geistiger Alarmbereitschaft zu sein für das Erlebnis der Mitwelt, und die auf den ersten Blick erfasste äußere Erscheinung der Dinge nie bereits für deren letzte innere Wahrheit zu halten. In dieser Schule ging es für die Adepten um die bewusstseinsmäßige Vorbereitung auf ein Leben für die Kunst und ein Wissen um das Arkanum künstlerischer statt epistemischer Erkenntniswege.

1979 wechselte Sheela Gowda an die Maharaja Sayajirao-Universität in Baroda; ihr Lehrer dort war der Maler K.G. Subramanyan (1924–2016). Subramanyan stand als politischer Anhänger Gandhis für eine wiederzubelebende Selbstgewissheit auf indische historische und kulturelle Identität. Er vermittelte ihr die Arbeit am Ichbewusstsein als notwendige Voraussetzung zur Bildung eigener visueller Sprachformen und führte sie in die Kunstpraxis ein. Als er 1980 als Professor für Malerei an seine eigene frühere Ausbildungsstätte, die Reform-Kunstschule Visva-Bharati im westbengalischen Santiniketan berufen wurde, folgte sie ihm dorthin. Diese Schule war 1901 von Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) gegründet worden, in dessen Geist als Denker und Gestalter in einem sie weiterarbeitete. Sie verfolgte eine ganzheitliche Bildung mit körperlichen und geistigen Erfahrungen, wozu auch praktische Alltagsfertigkeiten und soziale Verantwortlichkeit gehörten. Soziale Stufungen im traditionsorientierten Kastenland Indien und diskriminierendes Stadt-Landgefälle sollten zu allgemeiner und freier Seelenlage eingeebnet werden. Tagores humanistisches Erziehungskonzept mit seinen zeitgleichen europäischen Parallelen von der Reformpädagogik bis zur Werkbund-Ästhetik und weiter zum Bauhaus fiel in eine Phase erstarkenden indischen Nationalbewusstseins, das sich in der sogenannten Swadeschi-Bewegung gegen den britischen Kolonialimperialismus artikulierte. Der Boykott britischer Produkte im Verein

documenta 12 installiert, und *Behold*, entstanden 2009 für die 53. Biennale di Venezia. *And...* bezieht sich intrinsisch auf das Thema der Frau und der Arbeit von Frauen, das nicht nur horizontal in die soziale Gegenwart, sondern weit in die historisch-kulturelle Vertikale indischen Sittenlebens zurückreicht. Bildhaft ausgebreitet bildet das Werk aus 108 Fäden, die durch 108 Nadelöhre gezogen und mittels einer Kumkum-Paste zu einer über 100 Meter langen mäandernden blutroten Schnur verbunden sind, das Behältnis für ein mythisches Gefüge, das vom ruhenden weiblichen Raum, nicht von der bewegenden männlichen Zeit handelt, von leidender Geduld statt von Dynamik. Männlich Dynamisch-Gewaltsames analogisieren bei *Behold* dagegen Autoteile – jedoch nicht beliebige Autoteile, sondern, Stierhörnern vergleichbar, aggressiv konnotierte Stoßstangen. Der Raum ist stillgestellte Anschauung – Bewegung in der Zeit wäre dagegen die Form gewaltsamer Veränderung. Fernsichtiges Lineament und nahsichtige Handarbeit formen Bilder aus textilen Strängen, die Frauen mit Handfertigkeit flechten, in die hinein, nicht anders als mythische Parzen, Nornen und Moiren sie Leben und Schicksal verweben. Sheela Gowda bricht mit solchen raumzeitlichen Motivaufgriffen aus dem ästhetischen Schein in die Wirklichkeit vergangener Lebensformen, indem sie einen Weg zu deren Verständnis öffnet. Besonders augenfällig gilt dies für das Menschenhaar, aus dem *Behold* geflochten ist. Der Brauch, die vor dem Betreten des Tempels geschorenen Haare als Motiv darzubringen, gründet im mythischen Glaubensvorbild des kultischen Menschenopfers, auch Selbstopfers an die angerufene Liebesgöttin. Als derart, wenngleich immaterielle Opfertat der Künstlerin ist auch die unendlich lange Geduldsarbeit des Flechtwerkes zu verstehen. Sheela Gowda versenkt und erfüllt sich in der meditativen Aufgabe; sie bringt in *Behold* die rituelle Erarbeitung dessen als Repräsentation dar, was über Äonen zum symbolisch-idolischen Denken im Lebensvollzug ihrer Vorfahren gehörte. Der Opferkult wird zum Bilderdienst, der ein verdunkeltes Bewusstsein der Vergangenheit in erscheinender Gegenwärtigkeit zurück ans Licht hebt. Dennoch griffe es zu kurz, Sheela Gowda allein vom mythologischen Ansatz her zu verstehen. Der kritische Vektor in die Gegenwart führt gerade bei *Behold* mitten in die globale zeitgenössische Schönheitsindustrie, die das fromme Haaropfer der einen, entfärbt und entweiht, zum banalen Schönheitsfetischismus der anderen pervertiert. So kann am Schluss die These stehen, dass für Sheela Gowda der kulturhistorische Ansatz nichts weniger ist als der Fluchtpunkt für ihre kritische Befassung mit der Gegenwart.

Die Autorin ist Sammlungsleiterin für den Bereich *Kunst nach 1945* am Lenbachhaus in München.

Kunstwelten, Kunstmärkte, künstlerische Praktiken und das Dilemma der indischen Demokratie

Janaki Nair

Sheela Gowdas künstlerische Praxis hat sich parallel zu bedeutenden Momenten und entscheidenden Ereignissen in der Geschichte der indischen Republik entwickelt und ist von diesen geprägt. So kommen in ihrem Werk mehrere widersprüchliche Faktoren zum Tragen: Als postkoloniale Künstlerin beschäftigt sie sich mit dem Freiheitsversprechen und den Erwartungen, auf denen die Republik gegründet wurde. Auch die reiche Vielfalt des indischen Feminismus der vergangenen vier Jahrzehnte kommt in ihrem Werk zum Ausdruck. Gleichzeitig sind ihr die verheerenden Auswirkungen eines grotesk wachsenden Kapitalismus auf dem indischen Subkontinent (an dem der Kunstmarkt erkennbar Anteil hat) zutiefst und auf schmerzliche Weise bewusst. Überdies beeinflusst das gleichzeitige Aufkommen eines zersetzenden ethnischen Nationalismus ihre Entscheidungen für oder gegen bestimmte Materialien, Methoden und ästhetische Ziele.

Es sind vor allem vier miteinander zusammenhängende Themen, von denen Sheela Gowdas künstlerische Praxis am stärksten motiviert ist: Zum einen verarbeitet sie – die zwischen Stadt und Land aufwuchs und sich an deren Rändern bewegte – in ihrem Werk die Formen, insbesondere die Überreste und Trümmer, des ländlichen und urbanen Lebens und stellt diese bewusst in den Mittelpunkt. Zweitens hat sie in ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit alltäglicher (zum Beispiel häuslicher) Gewalt und mit der spektakulären Gewalt der hinduistischen Rechten bei der Umgestaltung der indischen Nation bekanntlich die Malerei aufgegeben; stattdessen hat sie sich unter anderem skulpturalen Installationen zugewandt, ist jedoch in jüngerer Zeit auf einem grundlegend erneuerten Weg zur »Malerei« zurückgekehrt. Drittens inszeniert sie, wenn auch nur im Privaten, den Prozess der künstlerischen Produktion beinahe als Buße, aber auch als Widerstand gegen die sehr strengen Gender- und Kastennormen, die das Arbeitsleben im indischen Kontext prägen. Viertens wird, was am wichtigsten ist, ihre beharrliche Befragung und Auseinandersetzung mit dem Dualismus von Tradition und Moderne zu einer Art Manifest, zu einem Engagement, das den wachsenden Aufwand, der in eine (erfundene) »Kultur« und »Tradition« gesteckt wird, hinterfragt – eine Last, die hauptsächlich von Frauen getragen wird.

Wie verhält sich diese ständig revidierte künstlerische Produktion zu den neuen Kräften des Marktes? Wie beeinflussen Akte des Kaufens (vor allem von Materialien wie Kumkum-Pulver oder Kuhdung, die auch andere Bedeutungen haben können) und Akte des »Verkaufens« – vor allem, aber nicht nur an Galerien – den selbstgewählten Prozess und seine Ergebnisse? Diese Frage lässt sich weniger leicht beantworten. Doch um Sheela Gowdas künstlerische Praktiken in ihrer Gesamtheit zu verstehen, darf man ihr Werk nicht nur auf kunsthistorische Zitate oder Verweise untersuchen, sondern muss es in den Kontext der Geschichte Indiens stellen. Dies ist die Aufgabe, der ich mich in diesem Essay stelle.

“Art Is about How You Look at Things”

Eva Huttenlauch

“The passage from the narrow to the larger world is stormy.”
—Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World*

Sheela Gowda was born in Bhadravati in the south of India in 1957. She received her art education in the 1970s and 1980s, when her native country underwent a more pervasive transformation in mere decades than it had in centuries before. At this juncture between two eras, she tried to absorb a twofold experience of India: the spiritual and intellectual traditions of its ancient culture, which had long sustained its communities, and the inexorable forward momentum of an unshackled global economy, which turned life into a struggle for material and cultural self-assertion that profoundly affected everyone’s life. As a long historical continuity of spiritual bonds and accustomed mentalities entered a crisis, Sheela Gowda set out to define her own personal and distinctive creative position.

The early phase of her career followed the prescribed trajectory of an artist’s training first in the Asian-Indian, then also in the European mold. She was first introduced to key ideas in visual art when, in 1974, at the age of seventeen, she enrolled at the Ken School of Art in Bengaluru, which had been established in 1968; she graduated in 1979 with a diploma from the school’s founding director, R. M. Hadapad (1936–2003). He exhorted his students to always keep their eyes wide open and be alert to the experiences of the world around them, and taught them not to take the outward appearance of things for their ultimate inner truth. His adepts needed to prepare their minds for a life for art and begin to probe the arcanum of artistic rather than epistemic paths toward insight.

In 1979, Sheela Gowda continued her education at Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda, where the painter K. G. Subramanyan (1924–2016) was her teacher. A political follower of Gandhi, Subramanyan championed efforts to revive India’s traditional cultural forms, especially its crafts. He impressed on the young artist the importance of working on her own consciousness as a necessary prerequisite for the development of a personal mode of visual articulation and introduced her to creative practice. In 1980, he was offered a professorship at his alma mater, the reform art school at Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan in West Bengal, where she followed him the same year. Established by Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) in 1901, the school retained its founder’s vision of the union of thought and creative work, promoting a holistic education that integrated physical and intellectual experiences, including practical everyday competencies and social responsibility. Hierarchical distinctions in India’s traditional society with its entrenched caste system and discriminatory urban-rural divide, should be leveled out and a universally shared freedom of mind achieved. Tagore’s humanistic educational ideas, which bore some resemblance to contemporary developments in Europe, from reform pedagogy to the Werkbund aesthetic and hence to the Bauhaus, coincided with the rise of an Indian national consciousness that found expression in the so-called Swadeshi movement against British colonial imperialism. Tagore supported the boycott of British products and efforts to achieve Indian economic self-sufficiency, key developments in the political situation that he portrayed in his 1916

depth in the cultural history of Indian customs. Unfurling an image composed of 108 strings threaded through the eyes of a 108 needles and glued together with kumkum paste to form a meandering 330-feet-long blood-red cord, the work serves as a vessel for mythical constellations that limn the reposing female principle of space rather than the actuating male one of time, suffering patience rather than dynamic energy. The male dynamism’s violent quality, on the other hand, finds its analogue in the car parts of *Behold*; more specifically, in bumper bars whose shape, comparable to the horns of a bull, underscores their aggressive connotation. Space is contemplation at rest—movement in time, by contrast, would be the form of violent change. Lineament perceptible from a distance and manual craftsmanship discernible from up close coalesce in images made of textile strands, woven by women with skilled hands who, not unlike the Parcae, Norns, and Moirai, weave in lives and fates as well. Sheela Gowda’s ingathering of such motifs that span space and time strips away aesthetic semblance to uncover past ways of life and open a path toward an understanding of their reality. This aspect is especially evident in her use of human hair to make the yarn for *Behold*. The custom of cutting off one’s hair to fulfill a vow taken and presenting it as a votive offering is rooted in the mythical religious model of the cultic human sacrifice, or self-sacrifice, to propitiate the goddess of love. The artist’s endlessly long work of patience joining lengths of the yarn is to be understood as her, albeit immaterial, sacrificial act. Sheela Gowda immerses and fulfills herself in the meditative task; in *Behold*, she offers up as representation the ritual making of what was for eons part and parcel of the symbolic-imagistic thinking that defined her ancestors’ vision of life. The sacrificial cult becomes a form of idolatry that brings an eclipsed consciousness back to light in the phenomenal presence of the past. Yet a reading of Gowda’s work narrowly focused on the mythological dimension would miss its larger point. In *Behold*, in particular, the critical vector pointing toward the present also takes into account today’s global beauty industry, in which the pious sacrifice of hair is bleached, profaned, and perverted to cater to the banal beauty fetishism of unbelievers. We may end these reflections, then, with the thesis that, in Sheela Gowda’s art, cultural history is nothing less than the anchor that moors her critical engagement with the world of today.

The author is Head of Collections *Postwar and Contemporary Art* at Lenbachhaus in Munich.

Art Worlds, Art Markets, Art Practices and the Predicaments of Indian Democracy

Janaki Nair

Sheela Gowda’s art practice has developed alongside, and has been shaped by, important moments and critical events in the history of the Indian republic. Several discrepant elements have therefore intersected in her work: as a post-colonial artist, she engages with the promise of freedom and the founding aspirations of the republic; the rich life of Indian feminism of the last four decades is also sedimented in her work. At the same time, she is painfully and profoundly conscious of the catastrophic effects of the grotesque growth of capitalism in the Indian subcontinent (of which the art market is a distinct part); the flourishing, alongside this, of a corrosive ethnic nationalism undergirds what she disavows or embraces in her choice of materials, methods and aesthetic goals.

Broadly, four cross cutting themes animate most of Sheela Gowda’s artistic practice: for one, as someone who has grown up on the cusp of the rural/urban, has hovered on its margins, her work incorporates and actively foregrounds the forms, but especially the detritus, of rural/urban life. Second, famously, she has relinquished painting, in her engagement with the forms of routine (say, domestic) violence, and the spectacular violence of the Hindu Right in reconfiguring the Indian nation. She therefore embraced, among other forms, the sculptural installation, but has of late returned to “painting” in a thoroughly reconstructed way. Third, she stages, though only privately, the process of artistic production, almost as a penance, but also as defiance of the very strict caste and gender norms that configure labour in the Indian setting. Fourthly, and most importantly, her constant querying of, and engagement with, the binaries of tradition and modernity becomes a manifesto of sorts, a commitment to unsettling the increasing investment that is being made in an (invented) “culture” and “tradition,” a burden borne principally by women.

How does such continually revised artistic production engage with the emerging forces of the market? How do the acts of buying (especially materials such as kumkum or even dung that might have other significations) and “selling”—particularly, but not only to galleries, mould the self-selected process as well as its outcomes? This is a question that is less easily answered. But to understand the fullness of Sheela Gowda’s artmaking practices, we need to emplace her work in contemporary Indian history, and not just its art historical quotations or references. This is the task that I undertake in this essay.

Markets

Bangalore, now Bengaluru, was a small town with an even smaller artworld in the 1970s and 1980s. A tiny private gallery called Krithika on St Mark’s Road in the 1970s was discreet, charming and everything that called “bourgeois” and gentility to mind. Artists such as Adimoolam or JMS Mani were unostentatiously shown to discerning audiences, sans the “opening,” the wine and other distracting, largely imitative, accompaniments of art shows in the decades to come. Such showings then merited no more than a short column in the local newspaper that was read by a discerning few.

Sheela Gowda. It.. Matters

Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau München / Munich
31. März bis 26. Juli 2020 / March 31 – July 26, 2020

Ausgestellte Arbeiten / Exhibited works

Where Cows Walk, 2020
Jute, Kuhdung / Jute, cow dung
6-teilig, 6 parts, je / each 200 × 120 cm

In Public, 2017
Vlies, Steine / Fleece, stones
256 × 676 cm

What Yet Remains, 2017
Metallplatten, Metallschalen /
Metal drum sheets, metal bowls
Maße variabel / Variable dimensions

Stopover, 2012
Granit, Klebeband / Granite, tape
200 Steine / stones, je / each ca. 60 × 60 × 60 cm
9 Stößel / pestles, je / each ca. 30 × 13 × 13 cm
Maße variabel / Variable dimensions

Margins, 2011
Holz, Emaillack, Ölfarbe, Metall /
Wood, enamel, oil paint, metal
Maße variabel / Variable dimensions
Sammlung / Collection of the Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art, Delhi

Protest, My Son, 2011
Aquarell auf Papier gedruckt, Vlies, Horn, Fell /
Watercolor printed on paper, fleece, horn, fur
287 × 424 cm; 60 × 90 cm
Ausstellungskopie eines Werkes aus dem Van Abbe-
museum, Eindhoven, 2020 / Exhibition copy from a work
in the Van Abbemuseum collection, Eindhoven, 2020

Behold, 2009
Haar, Metall / Hair, metal
Maße variabel / Variable dimensions
Tate Modern, London

Kagebangara, 2008
Teerfässer, Metallplatten aus Teerfässern, Glimmer, Plane /
Tar drums, tar drum sheets, mica sheet, mica, tarpaulins
Maße variabel / Variable dimensions
Sammlung / Collection of Sunitha and Niall Emmart

Best Cutting, 2008
Digitale Collage, Industriemarker, Tintenstrahldruck auf
Papier / Digital collage, glass-marking pencil, inkjet print
on paper
60 × 104 cm, 55 × 70 cm, 55 × 70 cm

And..., 2007
Faden, Nadeln, Pigment, Klebstoff, Niemöl /
Thread, needles, pigment, glue, neem oil
Maße variabel / Variable dimensions

Collateral, 2007
(in der Sankt Lukas Kirche / at St. Luke's Church)
Stahlgewebe, Holz, Asche von Räucherwerk /
Steel mesh, wood, ash from incense
Maße variabel / Variable dimensions

Darkroom, 2006
Teerfässer, Metallplatten aus Teerfässern, Asphalt, Spiegel /
Tar drums, tar drum sheets, asphalt, mirrors
260 × 240 × 330 cm
+91 Foundation, New York

Someplace, 2005
Verzinkte Metallrohre, Ton (Radio-Monolog) /
Coated metal plumbing pipes, sound (radio monologue)
Maße variabel / Variable dimensions

Sanjaya Narrates, 2004
Watercolour on paper / Aquarell auf Papier
14 Aquarelle, je / 14 Watercolours, each 25,5 × 33 cm
Sammlung / Collection of Sunitha and Niall Emmart

Chimera, 2004
Teerfass, Glimmerplättchen / Tar drum, mica flakes
87 × 50 × 50 cm
Sammlung / Collection of Sunitha and Niall Emmart

Untitled (Cow dung), 1992-2012
Kuhdung / Cow dung
Maße variabel / Variable dimensions

Untitled, 1992
Kuhdung, Kreide, Pigment auf Papier, Jute /
Cow dung, charcoal, pigment on paper, jute
208 × 170 cm

Untitled, 1992
Kuhdung, Kumkum, Stoff, Pastellfarbe, Papier auf Jute /
Cow dung, kumkum, textile, wood, pastel, paper on jute
132 × 142

Untitled, 1992
Kuhdung, Kreide, Pigment, Papier auf Jute /
Cow dung, charcoal, pigment, paper on jute
144 × 137 cm

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