Activist Murders - Killing the Idea

What is the issue?

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- The recent murders of prominent activists have been shocking.
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- It is important to know the victims and their work.
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Who where the victims?

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- **Narendra Dabholkar (1945-2013)** - was a medical doctor and Maharashtra's most prominent anti-superstition activist.
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- Dabholkar had penned a dozen books, edited a weekly for 16 years and founded the Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti.
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- He trained more than 10,000 teachers for fighting superstition.
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- He had drafted the 'Anti-Superstition and Black Magic Bill' that became an ordinance after his death.
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- **Govind Pansare (1933-2015) -** was a communist who was born in a poor family and became a lawyer practising labour law.
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- He was also a well-known writer and wrote the Marathi language book "Who was Shivaji".
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- He was the state secretary of the CPI and promoted the Shramik Nagari Sahakari Patsanstha (a cooperative bank).
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- He ran a centre for couples who had entered into inter-caste or inter-faith

marriages and that earned him bitter criticism.
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- **M M Kalburgi (1938-2015) -** was a renowned professor and a former vice-chancellor of Kannada University at Hampi.
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- He was a prolific writer and winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award.
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- He wrote and spoke against superstition and idol worship in Hinduism and incurred the wrath of right-wing groups.
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- **Gauri Lankesh (1962-2017) -** was a fierce activist with leftist leanings and even vouched for some pro-Naxalite causes.
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- She helped in rehabilitating Naxalite cadres who desired to return to the mainstream.
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- Gauri edited and published a tabloid that was anti-establishment, pro-poor, pro-Dalit and highly critical of Hindutva politics.
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- During her last days, she campaigned vigorously against fake news.
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- **Shantanu Bhowmick (1989-2017) -** was a young reporter for a TV channel in Agartala and earned a meagre salary.
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- He was a courageous journalist who would always be the first to rush to the scene of an incident.
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- He also ran a small nursery school from his home.
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- His last assignment was covering an agitation by the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura.
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What does the pattern say?

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- Neither were the victims behind political power nor did they hold an important office at the time of the murder.
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- All of them denounced violence and were from different age group.
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- All were highly educated and were comfortable in the world of ideas and debate.
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- It was these very ideas that spooked the perpetrators who carried out these murders.
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- They were catalysing inter-caste and inter-faith marriages, which intimidated the conservative faction.
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- It is high-time that we realise that intolerance of the conservative rightists & hate propaganda is damaging India’s diverse fabric.
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Source: Indian Express

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