

# THE INCARCERATIONS

**BK-16 and the Search for Democracy in India**

**by Alpa Shah**

14 March 2024 | £30.00 | Hardback | William Collins

**'No finer account has been written yet about the collapse of the world's largest democracy'** PANKAJ MISHRA

**'A sinister, fascistic wind is blowing across our divided planet; in today's India, it has reached gale force velocity. Shah has written a gripping and rigorous crime story about the murder of a once thriving democracy, exposing an arsenal of lethal weapons, some wielded on the streets, others in the courts and press. As importantly, *The Incarcerations* is the story of an extraordinary group of political prisoners – principled individuals who have lost their freedom, but not their belief in a radically better world.'** NAOMI KLEIN

**'A chilling, meticulously documented account of the arrest and ongoing trial of some of India's most exceptional citizens. *Incarcerations* shows us that the Bhima Koregaon 16 pose a danger to the current Hindu Nationalist regime not for what they have done, but for daring to have a different dream about what kind of country India should be. Alpa Shah's book is about the criminalization and incarceration of dissent itself. It does us a great service. This is not an endorsement so much as it is an expression of gratitude'** ARUNDHATI ROY

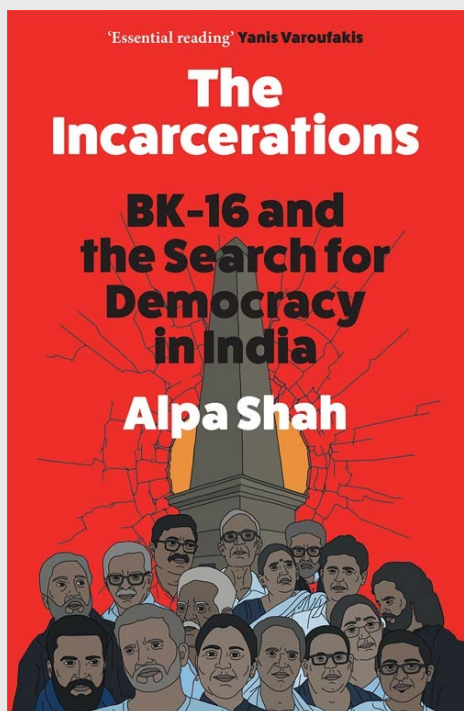
**'Essential reading for anyone who wants to know what is truly happening in India now – and why we have a duty to support those who are sacrificing everything to keep democracy possible across that great country'** YANIS VAROUFAKIS

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*The Incarcerations* tells the remarkable and chilling story of the unravelling of Indian democracy through the Bhima Koregaon case, in which 16 people – scholars, lawyers, democratic rights activists, artists and poets – have been imprisoned, without credible evidence and without trial, as Maoist terrorists.

Alpa Shah expertly leads us through the case, telling how the alleged terrorists were charged with inciting violence at a 2018 New Year's Day celebration, where none of them were present, and then accused of plotting to kill the Indian prime minister. Essential and urgent, *The Incarcerations* reveals how this case can be seen as the test case for democracy in India, as for the first time in the nation's history there was a multi-pronged coordinated attack on key defenders of various pillars of democracy. In so doing, Shah shows that democracy today must be not only about protecting freedom of expression, but also about supporting and safeguarding the social movements that question our global inequalities.

Through the story of the Bhima Koregaon case, *The Incarcerations* reveals how the world's largest electoral democracy has created an Indian form of fascism.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alpa Shah was raised in Nairobi, studied at Cambridge and completed her PhD at the LSE, where she now teaches anthropology. She is the author of *In the Shadows of the State, Nightmarch: Among India's Revolutionary Guerillas*, and a co-author of *Ground Down by Growth*. She presented the radio documentary 'India's Red Belt' for BBC Radio 4's 'Crossing Continents'.



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## **FURTHER ADVANCE PRAISE FOR THE INCARCERATIONS**

**'A timely wake-up call. Alpa Shah has done the 'free world' an invaluable service with a meticulous and engaging work charting an Indian tragedy with ominous parallels and wider lessons. Even the most populous constitutional democracies are vulnerable to demagogues of the populist right. It's no conspiracy when it happens in plain sight'** **BARONESS SHAMI CHAKRABARTI**

**'Alpa Shah tells the story of the BK-16 with razor-sharp analysis and the genuine compassion of a good storyteller'** **ECE TEMELKURAN**

**'A must-read to understand the scale of the assault on democracy, not only in India, but around the world'** **AMY GOODMAN, Host of Democracy Now!**

**'A profoundly important and urgent book for our times. Deeply researched and powerfully readable; bringing first hand testimony and long histories of activism and violence into focus, THE INCARCERATIONS should be read, shared, and cited by everyone who cares in even the smallest way about democracy and its abusers; about minority rights to land, dignity, and freedom of speech; about justice and the manipulation of law; about the unfair detention of thousands, and about India's future. It is probably the most devastating, vital and awakening book you'll read this year'** **PROFESSOR PRETI TANEJA, award-winning writer of Aftermath and We That Are Young**

## **PRAISE FOR ALPA SHAH'S NIGHTMARCH**

**Winner of the 2020 Association of Political and Legal Anthropology Book Prize**

**Finalist Orwell Prize for Political Writing**

**A New Statesman Book of the Year**

**Finalist New India Foundation Book Prize**

**Longlisted for the Tata Literature Live Non-Fiction Award**

**'One of the most nuanced, informed accounts yet of this strange and awful conflict. ... a considered, sympathetic and balanced analysis'**  
**GUARDIAN**

**'I've enormously enjoyed and admired Alpa Shah's careful, rich, sympathetic account of the Maoist insurgency in India ... a brave and necessary work'** **NEW STATESMAN**

**'Powerful, reflective and deeply engaged scholarship ... a perfect illustration of the unique contribution anthropologists can bring in comprehending the world we live in'** **LSE REVIEW OF BOOKS**

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