

Questions Unanswered

The present time in Gujarat has been a 'trying' time for all the citizens of India. Vadodara, a culturally rich city in Gujarat, has witnessed atrocious violence and devastation leading to enormous distrust and caution in the minds of citizens of this state. The reasons for this brutality, where the divisions between the minorities and the rest, who were previously so well intermingled, shall always remained unanswered.

The city of Vadodara has a rich history of art and culture to its acclaim. The 'art-scene' in Vadodara is one of the most vibrant in India and the city has seen the birth of new talent as well as new styles of art. In October this year, the art community awoke to the harsh reality of communal riots in its vicinity. Realizing that art cannot be divorced from its surroundings, artists in and affiliated to Vadodara decided to make their voices heard and contribute to the need of the hour through their show '*Voices against Violence*'.

In the '*Voices against Violence*' show, the artist community of Vadodara and artists who bear an emphatic stance to the prevailing turmoil in the state, have got together, to display works which unanimously seek to speak against the brutality of the times ... The artists displayed their works and agreed to put them up for sale- the proceeds of the sale will be given for the rehabilitation efforts routed through Vadodara Shanti Abhiyan, an NGO that is actively involved in this venture of helping the ones who are victimized in these communal clashes.

What is truly remarkable about the show in the exhibition hall of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara is the display of such a large body of work... 148 artists in a single gallery space, a space that "usually" doesn't have space for so many works. Few of the artists are well-acclaimed names like Bhupen Khakkar, Vivan Sundaram, Gulammohammed Sheikh and Indrapramit Roy along with talented upcoming artists together on an equal platform.

The works though done in different media, or are reproductions (photographic prints), murals, paintings in various sizes they all declare a reaction or an announcement to protest against the massive destruction and oppression.

The layout of the display is arranged 'craftily' and then put up on the wall; in such a way that the viewer's vision is not clustered with the many images. This display is done by first spreading the works on the floor and then getting them on the wall. (*as told by Mr. Shashidharan, a faculty member/artist- Painting Dept, Faculty of Fine Arts, MSU*).

The show is held to 'speak' of the communal disasters taking place in present Gujarat, or maybe to help in rehabilitation, whose credit is borne out by Art enthusiasts and buyers. The latter seems more likely as not all the works speak of the communal disharmony present in Gujarat at the time. This ambiguity questions the "*Voices against Violence*", which is the title of the show. Is it the voice of the artist community which speaks as a whole, where the works illustrate what they have to say or are they the voices of individual artists who are selling works (works which might not be connected to the

cause), to raise money for the suffering population. Whatever it's cause might be, this venture has definitely raised an awareness in the general public which alights an awareness to understand the futility of the present tension in Gujarat, which shall hopefully answer back to the voices of hate and communal disharmony!