* *13 Jan 2019 The New York Times*
* *By SUHASINI RAJ and JEFFREY GETTLEMAN Suhasini Raj reported from New Delhi, and Jeffrey Gettleman from Hampi, India.*

**Father Is Arrested in Beheading of Girl, 16, Who Wanted to See Her Boyfriend**

ZoomBookmarkPrint[Listen](http://nytimesnie.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/showarticle.aspx?article=e73c66b9-cbf6-407f-9e4c-62ff4d6bfa55&key=g2RBfJcdlVxEC50uBQLwGA%3d%3d&issue=83022019011300000051001001)

NEW DELHI — The 16-yearold girl had simply decided to go to her boyfriend’s birthday party. A week later, her body was found along a highway, her head and one of her arms chopped off. Her face may have been burned with acid.

In her small town in eastern India, it is forbidden for a teenage girl to date, and the police believe the girl’s father arranged for her to be killed — supposedly to protect the family’s honor.

It was yet another stomachturning case of extremely sadistic violence against a woman or a girl in India. On Friday, the police said the girl’s father, Turaj Prasad, had been formally arrested, along with a friend of his who was suspected of carrying out the killing. Charges were expected to be filed later. (The police are withholding the girl’s name.)

“It will be a long fight for the girl’s human rights,’’ said Gopal Patwa, an activist in Gaya, the main town in the area where the killing took place. “The condition her body was found in is inhuman, and I do not have words to describe the gory details.”

Villagers discovered the girl’s mutilated corpse on Sunday, and since then, thousands of people in her community have held protests and vigils.

As word has spread of the gruesome nature of her death, some people have compared it to the horrific gang rape and murder of a young woman on a bus in New Delhi in 2012, which led to much soul-searching in India about how often women are subjected to terrible violence.

“The MeToo movement has not reached the heartland,’’ said Rituparna Chatterjee, a journalist who has followed the case.

Police officials said the girl left her home in Patwa Toli, a community of a few thousand families, on Dec. 28 without telling her parents. She returned a few days later. The only person she had confided in was her older sister, telling her she was going to attend her boyfriend’s birthday party, the police said.

Upon her return, the police said, her parents beat her up. Her father then handed his daughter over to the friend. She was never seen alive again.

The girl belonged to a poor family of weavers and dropped out of school a year ago. She stood about four and a half feet tall and liked to keep her hair shoulder length, in a plait, her grandfather said. She often worked with her mother at the loom.

Her community, the Patwas, are traditionally weavers, working at power and hand looms in the Gaya district of Bihar State. Closed, conservative and orthodox, her community does not allow marriages outside its geographical boundaries, let alone so-called love marriages that are not arranged by family members, or marriage to someone of a different caste.

In this case, it seems the girl and her boyfriend were of the same caste. But the police said her parents were against any romance.

Most homes in the area are miniature factories, with hand and

power looms swishing back and forth all day long, belting out yarn. Many families like the girl’s work for the equivalent of less than $5 a day.

When she was found along the road, her head had been placed next to her frail body, the police said. She was dressed in the same cream-colored shirt and purple sweater she had been wearing when she disappeared.

“It’s not possible that that was the spot where the murder happened and the body kept lying there without anyone noticing it,’’ said Rajeev Mishra, a police official in Gaya. “She was presumably killed soon after she was sent away by the father with his friend. And then they must have kept the body somewhere before throwing it on the outskirts of the village.’’

Though there were rumors on social media that the girl had been raped, Mr. Mishra said “neither the circumstances nor any evidence points toward rape.’’

In addition to the father and his friend, the police have detained the girl’s mother and her three sisters for further investigation, though they have not been formally arrested. The girl’s boyfriend, though not a suspect in the case, has also been questioned.

“She was a very simple and shy girl and would call me Nana,” Hindi for grandfather, said Ghanshyam Das, the girl’s grandfather. “I wish she had visited me more often.”

Outraged by the killing, many weavers in the girl’s village recently walked with candles to the heart of the big city next door, Gaya. They carried placards reading “Stop Crime Against Women” and “We Want Justice.”

“It was the first time that a small town like ours saw such a huge gathering,’’ Mr. Patwa said. “This kind of protest has never happened before.’’

Other weavers have been protesting against the police, saying that the parents are innocent and accusing the police of trying to frame them.

Ms. Chatterjee, the journalist, said she became interested in the case after sifting through her inbox and finding many messages about it, including petitions calling for justice. At that point, few news outlets had written about the killing.

“What struck me was the apathy of the national and mainstream media. When someone forwarded me her body’s picture, I was horrified,’’ Ms. Chatterjee said.



“People in rural places are latching on to these badly worded petitions in the absence of any media highlighting this or any police action,” she said, speaking before the arrests were announced.