

Title: We are here to disturb you not sing a song

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‘We are here to disturb you, not sing a song’

Singing against oppression, Dalit singer and activist Sambhaji Bhagat enthuses students at IITGn with new sub-culture of protest through music

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Dalit activist and singer Sambhaji Bhagat on Tuesday performed his famous songs with his troupe at IITGn to a packed auditorium. The programme, organised by students of the institute and endorsed by professors and academicians, was attended by social activists, students and others. Bhagat, in a speech to the audience spoke about singing against oppression and how it can effect the mindset of the oppressed and the oppressor. He declared, “We are not here to entertain you, we are here to disturb you. We are not here to sing a song, we are here to sing a thought.”

He believes that a cultural revolution needs to be initiated and the only way it can be done is through folk lore and songs that are connected to the people. Bhagat is also the music composer of award winning Marathi film *Court*, India’s entry to the Oscars in 2015.

His troupe, composed of three



Sambhaji (R) has also composed award winning Marathi film *Court*

other singers apart from Bhagat and three instrument players, sang about Bhagat Singh, Dr Ambedkar and about people speaking up against oppression. Bhagat also spoke about racism, right wing nationalism and multinational companies taking over land from farmers.

Dalit leader Jignesh Mevani said, “It is only through activist literature and songs such as the ones we have heard today that make us realise the wrongs that have been committed against us and that we need to stand up and rise against the same.”

Pratik Khobragade, the humanities student who organised the programme, said, “We students feel that the contemporary protest space has shrunk in modern times and we are just trying to reclaim it. Bhagatji is a great advocate of the same so it was obvious that we call him to perform.”

He said that it was pertinent to recognise that crimes were being committed on a section of society and that the best way to make people realise the same and help them raise a voice against this injustice is through songs that connect to them.