

Title: Dalit Needs new form of organization for mass movement

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DNA Anchor Bhagat has strongly vocalised issues of social justice pertaining to caste & class in contemporary India

'Dalits need new form of organisation for mass movement'

In conversation with DNA's **Tanushree Bhatia**, Dalit activist and revolutionary artist Sambhaji Bhagat, who sang songs of protest at the Indian Institute of Technology, G'nagar, speaks about new age Dalits, reservation movements and current student movements on campuses across the country

Ahmedabad: At an event titled 'Songs of Protest', close to 300 IIT-Gn students cheered **Sambhaji Bhagat's** songs on Tuesday. Bhagat, who has strongly and significantly vocalised issues of social justice pertaining to caste and class in contemporary India, inspired students to keep contributing towards the economic and social growth of the country.

Bhagat said, "We are not here to entertain you, but are here to disturb you and to provoke your thoughts. We have attained political freedom, but we are yet to achieve social freedom and economic freedom." Below are excerpts from the interview:

Your views on current student movements on campuses

Bhagat: I am saddened that those

leaders, who gave their lives for the country and whose photographs hang on the walls of different organisations and institutions, are being murdered along with their thoughts. According to me, the murder of thoughts is heinous and this will take the country backwards. History has been quite violent. Fascists do not fear weapons, but fear thoughts.

Do poetic groups face a lot of threats from state machinery?

Bhagat: Such groups do face threats quite often because they want to expose the truth and talk about people's pulse and this is their fault. They talk about humanity and not caste.

Why do you express your thoughts through folk music?

Bhagat: I am a double graduate, but I am also from a village and am the son of a landless labourer. Although I understand modern India, I am also a villager and Bharat is my village. To under-

stand Bharat, I felt that I need to understand its people and communicate with them through their language.

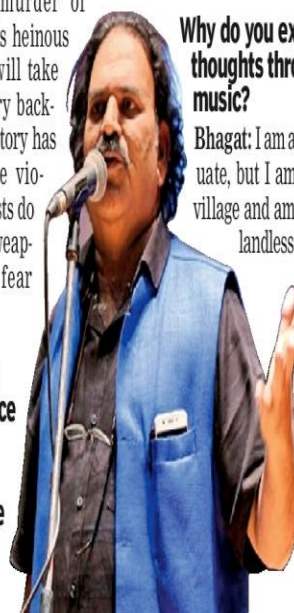
Will events like 'Chalo Una' have a strong impact on elections?

Bhagat: Straightforward elections will not happen in India right now. Many tactics are being used to suppress the voices of the poor. They portray what they want to do through pre-polls. They have intellectuals and have technology with them.

What do Dalits today need?

Bhagat: Gone are the days of the protests that used to happen years ago. The human race has changed and

Dalits need a new understanding and a new form of organisation for mass movement. They need to understand our current situation and then act accordingly



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