

3

Dalit Repression continues, pushing Haryana to disgrace....

In Haryana, atrocities against Dalits persist, continuing a history of brutal retaliation for minor conflicts. The state's Dalits are suffering from acute poverty. They lack the financial means. The majority of them make a living by working odd jobs or the fields owned by the landowning classes.

The Land Alienation Act of 1901 was enforced in undivided Punjab during British rule in order to further caste prejudice against Dalits. Discrimination still exists today, even though Haryana was formed on 1 November 1966 after being linguistically split from the Punjab. It increased the stark disparities in land ownership and assiduously worked to further weaken the Dalits, who are at the lowest social strata¹.

Legislation implemented to regulate land ownership after Independence has had minimal effect on actual property ownership in Haryana, as it has in other states. Jat landowners were able to take advantage of legal weaknesses and maintain their vast landholdings by using their political and social clout. Ironically, the introduction of Haryana's land ceiling legislation led to the eviction of Dalit tenants while being a provision intended to distribute land to the tiller. Although very little extra land has been made available for redistribution, even this is prohibited by threats, legal action, or simply by physically preventing access to the plot. As much as 86 percent of the state's arable land is currently owned by Jats, compared to less than 2 percent held by Dalits, who make up 20.17 percent of state's population².

The Jats' social dominance based on their ownership and control of the majority of land in the state, has allowed them to control the labour of those below them in the caste structure. The British, however, added to the notion of Jat supremacy by elevating them to the status of a "martial race" and enlisting significant numbers of them in active service during World War I. Jats now dominate almost every

¹ The Dynamics of Social Mobility, Land Inequalities and Occupational Structures in Punjab Since the Colonial Period: Some Observations | Supriya Bedi, Mainstream Weekly, April 17, 2021

² Haryana: Land, Caste, and Sexual Violence Against Dalit Girls and Women – A Report by WSS July 27, 2014, <http://sanhati.com/excerpted/10930/>

formal and informal organization in Haryana, as majority of Chief Ministers since its formation in 1966 has been Jats. Through *khap panchayats*, the Jats maintain a parallel government in the state.

However, the *Khap Panchayats* of the various Jat *gotras* obstructing the flow of democratic movement in society must also be held accountable for the increase in Dalit atrocities. Jats also control the police, administration, and bureaucracy. These institutions' conventional leadership has consistently had anti-Dalit bias.³

The repression against Dalits by the dominant castes bears all the hallmarks of a backlash to Dalits' growing political assertiveness and upward mobility, which the Jats see as a threat to their hitherto unquestioned exercise of economic, social and political power in Haryana. The inclusion of Dalits in elected panchayats through reservations has heightened this perception. There is open dissatisfaction that some educated Dalit youngsters (albeit only from a few sub-castes) have been able to capitalize on reservations in government positions as well as developing opportunities in the urban manufacturing and service sectors.⁴

The dynamics of Haryana's socio-economic trajectory need to be understood in the backdrop of neo-liberal economic reforms initiated in 1990s which has increased unemployment and exacerbated the agrarian crisis. The upper castes view the upward social mobility that the Dalits have experienced as a threat to the caste system, which has led to caste antagonism.

Incidents of Dalit oppression have also surfaced in predominantly Yadav and Gujjar districts of Haryana; nevertheless, in the caste system, they are ranked lowest, much like the Jats. In this instance, the class struggle is more evident than the caste system, in which the exploiter subjugates the toiling masses.

Dulina lynching

On October 15, 2002, five men were brutally murdered in front of the police and a number of high-ranking district officials on the major road outside the Dulina Police Post, close to Jhajjar town (district Jhajjar), Haryana. The killings may have been caused by a sizable and violent crowd. The crowd at the time thought that all five of the Dalits who were killed were involved in cow-slaughter. Few among the Dalits in Dulina, whose custom involved skinning deceased cows, went to buy buffalo hides. A licensed skinner sold the consignment of buffalo and cow skins to

³ Anatomy of Atrocities on Dalits in Haryana by Ranbir Singh, Mainstream Weekly Wednesday 3 September 2008 <https://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article899.html>

⁴ Rape as Atrocity in Contemporary Haryana, Economic & Political Weekly Vol. 50, Issue No. 44, 31 Oct, 2015 <https://www.epw.in/journal/2015/44/review-womens-studies-review-issues/rape-atrocity-contemporary-haryana.html#:~:text=This%20paper%20highlights%20the%20escalating,in%20the%20battle%20for%20justice.>

one of the animal skin dealers. A vehicle was rented, along with a few other skinners, to transport their goods to the adjacent town of Karnal, where they planned to sell them at a wholesale market. They were on their way to their destination, the Dulina chowki.

This group of skin traders halted the vehicle in the middle of nowhere, supposedly near the police station, after discovering a dead cow. They start to peel it so they may include it in their shipment. When onlookers noticed it, they suspected they had murdered the cow and brought them to the police station. Following that, word of the incident reached the nearby villages, and a raucous crowd assembled to storm the police stations housing the victims. The victims were brutally beaten to death after being hauled outside.

There mobs numbered roughly 4000–5000. The killings also happened in front of the Deputy Superintendent of Police, the Station House Officer, three sub-divisional magistrates, and perhaps 60 to 70 police personnel who had been dispatched there in response to an emergency call. They seemed to have just watched passively.⁵

An enquiry committee was then established, and it was made up only of police officers—including those who had been at the site of the killings. A startling aspect of this case is that the Superintendent of Police ordered a post-mortem report on the cow and filed a Cow Slaughter Act, 1960 case against the deceased Dalits. There exist multiple inconsistencies in the police accounts regarding the circumstances surrounding the incident. A lot of things did not add up. The city magistrate and the police did not take the appropriate action to stop the killing, according to the Banswal Commission, which was established to look into the incident.

The Chief Secretary oversaw the start of proceedings against three administrative officers who were prima facie proven guilty of mishandling the matter.

On August 9, 2010, following an extensive investigation, a district court sentenced seven of the case's guilty parties to prison. Since the complaint was brought under the SC-ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act), 1989 an accelerated resolution was required. Furthermore, these delays were not justifiable given the seriousness of the occurrence. In the end, a judge found that the crime was deliberate and well-planned. Seven of the thirty accused were found guilty of various crimes, including trespassing, rioting, and murder.

⁵<https://dalithistorymonth.medium.com/dulina-the-legacy-of-a-long-history-of-lynching-dalits-7c3c51a2f180#:~:text=The%20Dulina%20atrocities%20caused%20massive,lives%20of%20the%20victims'%20of%20families.>

It is noteworthy, therefore, that even though there was extreme violence committed against people from Dalit communities, the case was not handled in accordance with the SC-ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act), 1989. On the contrary, a number of social and religious groups staged a demonstration in favour of the accused and asked that no legal action be taken against them. The overwhelming support these men received was mostly due to their dominant caste background.

Dalit lynchings in Dulina sparked widespread indignation throughout the nation and demonstrated that Dalits continue to face such heinous violence in spite of numerous laws providing protection, leaving a permanent mark on the life of the victims' relatives. After their breadwinners passed away, the majority of households had little to no other means of support. Furthermore, the procedural flaws in the way the case was handled further highlight the biases against Dalits that present in the legal system. Most notably, the government refuted claims that the five Dalits who were killed in Jhajjar were the victims of a premeditated crime against Scheduled Castes.

Take into consideration that Dalits have been compelled to remove cow and other carcasses and perform leatherwork using the skins of deceased buffalo and cows due to a system of caste slavery. They are regarded as untouchables and are deemed dirty and contaminated as a result of their forced labour. Then consider the fact that they are lynched for performing the same work, and that officials then deny that they have been killed for being Dalits. This is all tantamount to egregious unfairness and unlawful falsification of facts.

Gohana's torching of houses belonging to Balmikis

On August 31, 2005, 50 to 60 houses belonging to the Balmikis were set ablaze in broad daylight in Arya Nagar, Gohana in Sonapat district, just 75 kilometers from the national capital. A mob of 1,500-2,000 Jats attacked their houses in a systematic manner. The assailants had arrived fully armed with spears, batons, axes, and fuel and kerosene oils. They smashed TVs, refrigerators, and washing machines, stole valuables, and exploded LPG cylinders.⁶

Arya Nagar has a mixed population of Gujjars, Jats, Brahmins as well as other castes including Balmikis live in the same area. Gujjars, It was easy enough, of course, for a mob of two thousand to recognize the homes of the 'others,' the dalits. The pucca dwellings of the Balmikis that adorned that colony seemed to be considered an "eyesore" by the other residents. How come dalits could 'compete'

⁶ Guilty Of Gohana- In Search of The Real Perpetrators by Subhash Gatade, Counter Currents, 10 September, 2005 <https://www.countercurrents.org/dalit-gatade100905.htm>,

with the dominant caste in matters of housing?⁷

Following the August 27 2005 murder of a Jat youth Baljeet Siwach, members of the Balmiki community in Arya Nagar had left their houses, fearing retaliation. Soon after, the Balmikis' homes were the subject of retaliation that was focused on property rather than lives. The FIR filed subsequent to the burning and looting of Balmiki houses mentioned Pradeep Sangwan and Ranvir Sangwan, the son and brother, respectively, of Kishen Singh Sangwan, a BJP MP in the FIR. The MP refuted the involvement of his son. BJP members, including the block president, made up 15 of the 23 men who were charged under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.⁸

The mob of 2000 looted everything that could be looted, set fire to what was left. Ultimately in the pattern of the Gujarat pogrom 2002, the organized mob turned on the LPG cylinders, allowed the gas to fill the house, and proceeded to destroy the ceilings. And during it all, the police did nothing but watched like mute spectators as the events unfolded. In the vicinity, around 200 strong police forces were occupied with managing the onlookers who had come to witness the 'live' burning down of Balmikis houses, while their seniors were sleeping at the Gohana rest house.

The Balmikis, who had been relegated to the lowermost status in the caste hierarchy, in Gohana had not only moved up a few ladders of social mobility, thanks to the efforts put in by the people coupled with the affirmative action programmes of the government, but had also started asserting for their rights. The Jats in the area, who have long dominated politics and society in a variety of ways, felt endangered by the Balmikis' recent awakening. They used the Jat youth's murder as a focal point for their rallying point. It is undeniable that political parties play a compromising role. It was alleged, that the operation was being led by the local BJP MP's close family⁹.

Several caste panchayats have also made clear their anti-democratic, anti-Dalit, and anti-gender agendas. Using the law as an opportunity to teach a traditional medieval "lesson" to Dalits, they took up the issue without hesitation. Section 4 of the SC-ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 requires the government to act immediately against the responsible police officers and others for their willful negligence in protecting Dalits and their property, as well as for their participation

⁷ Guilty Of Gohana- In Search Of The Real Perpetrators by Subhash Gatade, Counter Currents, 10 September, 2005 <https://www.countercurrents.org/dalit-gatade100905.htm>

⁸ Fire of aggression by TK Rajalakshmi, 23 Sep 23, 2005, Frontline <https://frontline.thehindu.com/other/article30206448.ece>

⁹ Guilty Of Gohana- In Search Of The Real Perpetrators by Subhash Gatade, Counter Currents, 10 September, 2005 <https://www.countercurrents.org/dalit-gatade100905.htm>

in the riots. Identification and prosecution of the actual attackers in accordance with the applicable provisions of the SC ST act are obviously not sufficient measures of justice.¹⁰

Mirchpur violence

Mirchpur, predominantly Jat village with a sizable number of Balmiki and Chamar families, a few Dom families, and a few Brahmin household, is located in the Hisar district of Haryana, about 145 kilometres from New Delhi. Despite some economic progress, the Dalit population still relies heavily on the Jat community for their daily subsistence of farming and milking.

Dalits in this village have experienced caste abuse and atrocities for years without these coming to the surface. In May 2007, 5 Dalits of the Dom community, men and women, were paraded naked by a landlord of the village.¹¹

The local administration in Mirchpur harbours an underlying animosity for Dalits. To debunk Dalit accusations and avoid enforcing Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, the law enforcement agencies, for example, appears especially eager to uncover minute facts.

This is nothing new for Mirchpur. The administration had responded in much the same manner in 2010 when a barking dog and a drunk Jat man shone the media spotlight on the village. Angry Jats torched 18 Dalit-owned homes, killing an elderly man, Tara Chand, and his disabled daughter. The Justice Iqbal Singh Commission, constituted by the Haryana government in 2010 to probe into the incident, had noted in its report:

“Implementation of laws relating to atrocities on Scheduled Caste is characterised by apathy, indifference and even bias and hostility on the part of enforcement machinery.”

A 10-page report on Mirchpur was delivered in 2014 by an inspection team that included sessions judge AK Jain and assistant professor Shamim Modi from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS).

It said that a separate settlement should be created for local riot victims. The Haryana government rejected the suggestions claiming that it would add to the segregation. The government has also not provided rehabilitation to the victims of

¹⁰ Guilty Of Gohana- In Search Of The Real Perpetrators by Subhash Gatade, Counter Currents, 10 September, 2005 <https://www.countercurrents.org/dalit-gatade100905.htm>

¹¹ FACT- FINDING REPORT OF MIRCHPUR CARNAGE AGAINST DALITS ON 21 APRIL 2010 https://idsn.org/wp-content/uploads/user_folder/pdf/New_files/India/NCDHR_FF_report_Haryana_Final.pdf

the 2010 attack.¹²

In the aftermath of 2010 Mirchpur violence the Justice Iqbal Singh Commission produced a thorough report. The report made recommendations at the state, district, and village levels, as well as at the judicial and educational levels. The commission observed that there wasn't even a billboard anywhere which mentioned the SC/ST Act mentioned, which was, for all practical purposes, absent.¹³

Rajat Kalsan, a Hisar based lawyer, decided to litigate on behalf of the Dalit victims of Mirchpur. On January 20, 2011, the Court decided to send the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) due to his steadfast resolve. When the jury found no one guilty of murder but found 15 people guilty and 82 people not guilty, Kalsan was disappointed. Three people were found guilty of murder. On October 24, 2018, the Delhi High Court overturned the acquittals of 20 people and found 13 of the accused guilty. It has never happened before that there were so many convictions in Dalit atrocity case.

Following the protests, some of the accused were taken into custody by the police. When the lawyer for the Mirchpur victims decided to take the case, no advocate was willing to represent the Balmikis. Due to Jat community's immense influence in the administration and government, no one dared to speak up as a lawyer for the community. He went to the victims and took up their case, promising them justice. The lawyer noted that the fact that the suspects apprehended after the demonstrations were transported straight to court rather than being held in prison hindered the process of gathering evidence. The defence lawyer asked that the accused be brought back into court on remand.

The witnesses were terrorized by the accused, especially the Jats in the village. All the Jat lawyers were representing the Jats, the perpetrators, and even government lawyers seemed to align with the dominant community's stance. Around 300-400 people from the dominant community attended the court hearing. While speaking to Dalit witnesses, a person came and authoritatively stated that the accused had reached a compromise with the victims and that Rajat Kalsan should not interfere.

A confrontation followed when the lawyer resisted. However, only 11 of his

¹²Mirchpur, Haryana: "Crush The Poor, And Everyone Is Happy" Ishan Kukreti 3 Feb, 2017. In NewsLaundry https://www.newsLaundry.com/2017/02/13/mirchpur-haryana-crush-the-poor-and-everyone-is-happy?fbclid=IwARo7TCWb5zLWyTQPatXkqRtbr_o_FQnCrLveoxvNZYtx8ADysKS8DtPefOo

¹³Mirchpur, Haryana: "Crush The Poor, And Everyone Is Happy" Ishan Kukreti 3 Feb, 2017. In NewsLaundry https://www.newsLaundry.com/2017/02/13/mirchpur-haryana-crush-the-poor-and-everyone-is-happy?fbclid=IwARo7TCWb5zLWyTQPatXkqRtbr_o_FQnCrLveoxvNZYtx8ADysKS8DtPefOo

witnesses turned hostile. He felt that a fair trial couldn't be held in this intimidating state atmosphere. This prompted Rajat Kalsan to transfer the case to Delhi. He approached Colin Gonsalves of the Human Rights Lawyers Network. They petitioned the Supreme Court under Section 406 of the Criminal Procedure Code to transfer the case because witnesses were being frightened and lawyers were being assaulted. In an affidavit, the Hisar session judge verified that he had been attacked. The Supreme Court assigned the matter to Delhi's Rohini Court.

This move did not sit well with the Jats. *Khap panchayats* protested the transfer of the case to Delhi by blocking Haryana's railway tracks. They demanded the release of all the accused and attempted to charge me with sedition, accusing me of plotting against the state's brotherhood. They used numerous strategies, Rajat Kalsan and his father, who is also an advocate were forced by the lawyers' lobby to withdraw the case.

Bhagana violence

Bhagana village in Hisar Mandal, is part of Hisar district in Western Haryana. The nearest town is Hansi, 13 kilometres away. With a total land area of 1635 hectares as per the 2001 Census, Bhagana is a medium sized village as per Hisar standards. This includes 1329 hectares of irrigated land; 149 hectares of unirrigated land and 157 hectares of land not available for cultivation.

According to local sources the village is about 300 years old. The layout of Bhagana, like in most other villages in North India is an indication of changing social relations and histories. Most of the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Backward Caste (BC) houses lie in the outer areas of the village with the Jat houses occupying the centre. However, there isn't the absolute segregation between the two communities so visible in villages in North India. While there are streets inhabited only by members of a particular caste, in a few parts of the village different groups occupy the same area.

In Bhagana, as per the 2001 census, there were 878 households with a total population of 4884 persons. Of these 1322 persons belonged to the Scheduled castes that is about 27% of the total population of the village. The largest percentage are Jats, followed by Brahmins and Banias among the upper castes, as also some Panjabi families. Amongst the Dalits, the Chamars are the largest number with followed by the Dhanaks. Other Dalit castes in the village are Khati, Duma, Balmiki, and Baiga. Backward castes include Chimbi, Teli, Lohar, and Goswami of whom the largest group are Kumhars. Jats and the upper castes together form approximately 67% of the population of Bhagana, of which about 85% are Jats. Dalits form about 24% of the village among whom Chamars are the

largest group. Rest are backward castes which form about 9% of the village.¹⁴

However, Bhagana appeared to offer, in the form of the boycott, a condensed version of all the individual cases of discrimination and hundreds of small acts of caste oppression that comprise the lived reality of caste in Haryana, which had gone unchallenged due to an absolute hierarchy in resource ownership and control.

On March 23, 2014, away from the media glare as the election campaign were in full swing, 4 Dalit girls belonging to Balmiki community of Bhagana village were kidnapped by a group of Jats boys and gangraped. They were dumped at Bhatinda railway station in Punjab, 170 kilometres away where they were found in almost unconscious state by the village sarpanch and their relatives a day later.

Jats, the dominant community in Bhagana imposed a social boycott on the Dalits in May 2012. Those involved in concerns of caste discrimination and injustice in Haryana had a similar perception of the situation. Caste violence has been steadily increasing since 1990s, and it was related to the growing Dalit consciousness. Dalits began to establish their identity and learned to challenge caste norms of subordination and inequity. The Bhagana violence must also be understood in the context of growing Dalit consciousness and the refusal of long-standing caste dominance to yield.¹⁵

In 2012 in Bhagana, the bone of contention between the communities became the issue of ownership over common village lands known as '*shamilat* lands. These are common lands available for use by all communities under the supervision of gram panchayat and cannot be acquired privately. In 2008, however, the Haryana government launched the Mahatma Gandhi Gramin Basti Yojana under which the *shamilat* lands were to be acquired by the government and redistributed to fulfil certain ends. According to the government, the scheme was aimed at benefiting the poorer sections of the society by allotting free residential plots.¹⁶ This scheme all over Haryana was being used by the panchayats to claim the village common land and redistribute to Jats to ensure their legal occupation of common land. Bhagana's case was no different.¹⁷ In Bhagana, the panchayat initiated the process

¹⁴ <https://puodr.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/THIS%20VILLAGE%20IS%20MINE%20TOO.pdf> (accessed on 5th October 2023)

¹⁵ How a peaceful Dalit demonstration led to charges of sedition Anushka Singh July 28, 2018 <https://indianculturalforum.in/2018/07/28/how-a-peaceful-dalit-demonstration-led-to-charges-of-sedition/>

¹⁶ From the official website of Development and Panchayat Department, Government of Haryana, available at <http://haryanapanchayat.com/ShowSubPage.aspx?IsValid=true&get=87> (Accessed on 6th October 2023)

¹⁷ A group of Dalit activists working under the banner of SC-BC Adhikar Manch have studied the process of *shamilat* land distribution in Haryana and have come to this conclusion <https://puodr.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/THIS%20VILLAGE%20IS%20MINE%20TOO.pdf> (Accessed on 5th October 2023)

of distributing these lands in 2011 under a Dalit sarpanch however, once the sarpanch changed, the entire process was hindered. A committee comprising the elders in the village was set up to oversee the distribution of the land once the Dalit sarpanch was removed. This committee had overwhelming presence of members of the Jat community and it collected Rs 1000 each from all Dalit families to oversee the distribution. In addition to land allotment to Dalits, now lands were also set aside for Jat households despite the fact that the scheme was only meant for the marginalised section. After the collection of funds from Dalits, however, the process was completely stalled after 2011.¹⁸

Dalits living in Bhagana village protested against this farce and approached the administration and court over the issue. The dominant community became antagonistic to the Dalit villagers as a result, and they prohibited the presence of Dalits in many portions of the village common lands that had previously been used by all the populations living in the village. The administration's apathy to the issue, along with the increasing hostility of the Jats in the area, prompted the Dalits to assert their presence as well. For many years, a fight erupted over a small triangular plot of land known as the 'Chamar chowk,' which connected three Dalit families. In April 2012, the Dalits chose to rename this location the 'Ambedkar Chowk. This renaming of the chowk was interpreted by the Jats as Dalit assertion over that common area and they responded in form of a tangible boycott by constructing a six feet wall blocking any entry into the Dalit area.

The construction of 6 feet wall hampered Dalit villagers and cut off access to necessary supplies. As a result, the Dalits went to the police. The authorities responded, but not as a case of caste boycott, but as a case of Dalit 'illegal assertion' of land. Many Dalit villagers were taken into custody. The Jat community boycotted those who remained, denying them the right to work as landless workers on their farms and denying them access to water pumps and other community facilities that supplied basic services¹⁹.

In rebuilding the wall, the Jats asserted their control using illegal coercive tactics based on their historical dominance, in the face of Dalit resistance. through constitutional means and remedies.²⁰

¹⁸ For the background of the boycott in Bhagana, see joint fact-finding report by Peoples' Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and Association for Democratic Right (AFDR), This Village Is Mine Too, Dalit assertion, Land Rights and, Social Boycott in Bhagana, September 2012, available at <https://pudr.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/THIS%20VILLAGE%20IS%20MINE%20TOO.pdf> (Accessed on 5th October 2023)

¹⁹ How a peaceful Dalit demonstration led to charges of sedition Anushka Singh July 28, 2018 <https://indianculturalforum.in/2018/07/28/how-a-peaceful-dalit-demonstration-led-to-charges-of-sedition/> (accessed on 7th October 2023)

²⁰ <https://pudr.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/THIS%20VILLAGE%20IS%20MINE%20TOO.pdf>

In this backdrop, the establishment of pseudo-constitutional entities such as the Committee' for the distribution of Shamilat lands, with a chairman and representatives from Dalit and BC communities, is notable in Bhagana. It replicated the workings of constitutional bodies established to extend the 'rights' of the Dalits, but to the reverse effect - systematically depriving the Dalits and BCs of their rights.

Jat domination has historically been maintained through Khap Panchayats, which issue decrees governing the village's social structure and impose penalties and fines. Gram Panchayats have failed to replace Khap Panchayats. Gram Panchayats, which are largely Jat-dominated, have done nothing except use their administrative authority to strengthen the Jats' domination. These structures have established who, when, and whether resistance is allowed. The illegal committee's distribution of the land appears to have been based on the presumption that it controlled various village mechanisms. By appropriating Shamilat land for themselves on the one hand and denying the Dalits' usage rights on the other, they were able to not only maintain but also strengthen Jat dominance. The conflict over the playground and the chowk then became an assertion by Jats that the Dalits could not lay claim to the village as equal residents, that their way of life could only be sustained through Jat generosity.²¹

Bahujan Samaj Party and Dalits in Haryana

Haryana has a population of 20.17% belonging to Scheduled Caste. Despite having a sizable population, the Scheduled Caste community in Haryana, which is affiliated with many groups or political parties. Although the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which asserts that it champions the cause of the Dalit community and fights for it, was solely responsible for bringing the Scheduled Caste (SC) population living in Haryana into its fold. But over the past 10 to 15 years, it has been noted that neither the BSP's state leadership nor its national leadership has ever demonstrated the kind of political sagacity or acumen necessary to win the state's legislative assembly elections or to form the government. During the assembly elections, BSP brings parachuted candidates and tickets are bought and sold. Till now, the BSP has not been able to gain any seats in the state's assembly.

Scheduled Caste community in the state and the present scenario

The state has three castes that make up the Scheduled Caste community: Chamar, Dhanak, and Balmiki. In social awareness campaigns, Chamars are the most active, followed by Balmiki and then Dhanak. Since 2014, the Bharatiya Janata Party

(Accessed on 7th October 2023)

²¹ <https://puodr.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/THIS%20VILLAGE%20IS%20MINE%20TOO.pdf>

(Accessed on 7th October 2023)

(BJP) has been in power in Haryana. and there is a Minister from Chamar caste in the state cabinet, holding unimportant portfolio and he is quite docile and mute. Balmiki representatives in the BJP are very active and have been asked to polarize the Balmiki community by spreading a false narrative that the rights of the Balmikis have been usurped by the Chamar community as the State Government audaciously tries to strike a wedge between Chamars and Balmikis. On the other hand, there have been attempts by government backed functionaries to rope in people from one community in the name of the Chamar conference. Dr. BR Ambedkar effort was to bring together all of the castes and sub-castes, who were known as Scheduled Caste, without allowing each caste to split apart. Although leftist philosophy is progressive, caste prejudice and the Manuvadi social outlook still exist among people who adhere to it or who are in positions of leadership in leftist organizations or parties. When these left parties mobilize people around any of their issues, the SC community makes up the bulk of those taking part in their campaigns. When there are cases of atrocities, murders, rapes, gangrapes, social boycotts, or caste-based violence, and there is hardly any involvement from left parties or organisations. The left parties or organizations produce press releases separately in a united movement even though they engage in it with a small number of activists and it has been their method of operation in united movements. Dalit activists claim that they consistently take part in left programmes and activities. We try to establish relationships with the left parties or groups, but they think that left parties are purposefully ignoring the Dalit organisations and activists. The left parties and groups speak out against the discrimination faced by government employees and their demands. The leftists actively join in farmer struggles, but it has been observed that never raise issues faced by Scheduled Caste community.

Implementation of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in Haryana

Since its enactment, the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 has been dormant for many years, as many people—particularly those from scheduled caste community—have been under the impression that they are protected from atrocities committed against them by the dominant caste by law. In Haryana, people become aware of this Act after 2004. The Jat community accounts for 80% of the offenders of caste-based violence. Nonetheless, since the state's formation, 80 percent of its chief ministers have been Jats, 60 to 70 percent of police officers and staff have been recruited from the Jat community. The state's Jat Chief Ministers have done their community a favour by providing Jats majority of government jobs. Despite being in the fourth category of the varna system, Jats are classified as a backward caste by Manusmriti. However, in Haryana, despite their backwardness, Jats have significant political power since they have government jobs and a large amount of landed property, which gives them an arrogant sense of

superiority that they take out on the SC community. The majority of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act) 1989 case defaulters belong to Jat community. When there is a significant case involving the SC community, such as a murder, rape, or gangrape, the public becomes involved and puts pressure on the police to make an arrest because the evidence points to the perpetrators. However, scheduled caste officers are not even permitted to pursue the appropriate legal action; instead, other responsibilities are placed on them to keep them at bay. This applies to all officers in the SC community, including SPs, Deputy Commissioners, and SDMs. Instead, an attempt is made to reach a peaceful resolution so that the offenders are not punished and SC/ST Act is not permitted. Scheduled Caste officials do not have the courage to apprehend those who engage in acts of caste violence. Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala and other Jat ministers would exert pressure on these officers to refrain from taking any action if there is a desire to arrest the perpetrators. I am aware of numerous examples in which the police did little to stop criminal activity. There are numerous cases when offenders were unpunished and are moving scot-free. In many of the major cases I handle, the police refuse to make an arrest, citing concerns that doing so would undermine law and order. Jats have a powerful judicial lobby. Although the SC/ST Act stipulates that the perpetrator would not be granted anticipatory bail following the registration of the case. This Act has been amended. Under the SC/ST Act, anticipatory bail is being granted by the Special Court. In violation of this Act, the High Court is openly awarding anticipatory bail. Following the Bharat Bandh on April 2, 2018, the Supreme Court issued Guidelines since the Central Government had amended the SC/ST Act to require the filing of a FIR based on the complaint. Based on these guidelines, numerous FIRs have been filed. The Guidelines' covert goal is to have as many cases under the SC/ST Act cancelled as possible. Only SC/ST Act cases has a format.

Every police station has been directed to maintain a monthly log of all cases registered under the SC/ST Act, including the number of cases that are found to be true and the number of cases to be false. 90% of false cases are shown in the data that is being prepared for each district. 9,000 out of the 10,000 cases that were filed under the SC/ST Act nationwide were found to be false. In the coming days, the information would be utilized in Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filings to blunt the SC/ST Act, making the sole weapon to prevent the atrocities against Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe. There is a strong nexus to obfuscate the SC/ST Act. In this nexus there are political bigwigs from the BJP, Congress, and other parties. Police officers, judicial officers, and administrative officers are all complicit in this, because they do not want the SC/ST Act to be properly implemented, so that the SC community does not receive justice, and they want them to remain in the perilous situation in which they have been living for 300 years. Officers belonging

to the SC community, such as SPs and DCs, are purposefully denied promotions and are never offered plum positions. IAS/ IPS officers from SC community are made Director of the Records. They are assigned trivial positions like Director of Employment or other minor departments; Scheduled caste officers are never assigned creamy positions. None of them have been made the Chief Secretary or DGP, even if anyone from SC community gets plum post they are nothing but merely puppets.

However, the SC-ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 imposes severe penalties and provides the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities, as well as their movements, with a legal weapon to combat caste discrimination. The Act encompasses a number of aspects of caste oppression that are not taken into consideration by ordinary legislation. It acknowledges and penalizes denial and social violence as crimes. With the exception of Mirchpur, no FIR has been registered under this Act by the Haryana police, despite the violence in Mirchpur, the Bhagana social boycott, Duliana lynchings and Gohana torching of Balmiki houses and numerous incidents of abuse and threats against SCs and STs.

The SC-ST Act recognises as blatant instances of caste atrocities and offences any interference with the enjoyment of one's right over any land or premises, as well as being compelled to leave one's home, village, or other place of habitation. A blatant violation of section 4 of the SC-ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is also the failure to register a FIR. Currently, public employees who violate Section 4 of the statute may be punished for up to a year if they fail to enforce the law in accordance with standard operating procedures. Under the Act, the minimum penalty is six months in jail and a fine; however, if the offence is also punishable under the Indian Penal Code, the maximum sentence is up to life imprisonment and a fine.

Mirchpur violence and Supreme Court

Following the caste violence in Mirchpur, a petition was filed in the Supreme Court asking for relocation of the affected villagers from Mirchpur to another village or district. Congress was in power at the time and claimed they could not segregate on the basis of caste in their affidavit before the Supreme Court. By copying and pasting Congress affidavit to the Supreme Court, the BJP demonstrated their inability to rehabilitate the victimised villagers. Later on, to accrue political dividends, the affected villagers belonging to SC community were given plots in Hisar but it was not free of cost. Rather than that, the homestead lands of affected SC villagers were forfeited. Victimised villagers were given plots in instalments. On the contrary, the State Government trumpeted that Mirchpur victims were given plots free of cost. There was unscrupulous behaviour on the part of the defence lawyers and the Haryana government at the time in the Mirchpur case. The state

government kept the imprisoned perpetrators of caste violence in special barracks with three-star amenities and lavish meals. They had all the comforts they needed until being sent to Tihar Jail in Delhi. As the Haryana government was working on a compromise so that the offenders could be freed, we spoke out against their lenient treatment of these criminals. Until then, a settlement would have been found if we hadn't petitioned the Supreme Court.

Bhagana violence, Haryana Government and Dalit activists

In Bhagana, Jats had pulled up walls in front of the houses where the scheduled caste villagers lived and renamed the Ambedkar Chowk into Jat Chowk. In that matter till now, no FIR has been lodged. The Court did not listen to the affected villagers rather a case of sedition was filed against the protesting villagers. On this issue, as Rajat Kalsan said, "I met the then Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda accompanied by the affected villagers from Bhagana. Prior to our meeting with the then Haryana CM we met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a delegation he then asked us to meet the Haryana in-charge of the party, Janardan Dwivedi, then he talked to the state CM and fixed our appointment. Along with 7-8 villagers from Bhagana residents, I met the then Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda. He asked us what was wrong, and we were joined by Bhagana Kand Sangharsh Samiti front ranking activist, Virender Bhagoria, who informed the CM that the Jats had built walls and seized the land. Subsequently, the CM inquired me where I live. I said, "I live in Hisar. Then the CM told me you keep mum," to which Bhagoria replied, "Our land has been taken possession of." The CM then retaliated, asking which of your land had been acquired? Do you own it? Then Bhagoria, "No, it's panchayat land," to which he answered. "Why are you raising such a fuss?" I intervened and informed the then Chief Minister Hooda, Sir, that the situation was such that a barrier had been created by pulling up a wall, where children from the SC community used to play by occupying that children were prohibited from playing. It appeared that the CM was trying to browbeat with his intimidating tactics. I said, "In their village, a social boycott has been implemented. Sedition charges were brought against them when they protested. Have they damaged any public property, stopped any roads, or looted any ATMs? I referred to Jat agitation for reservation, just to tease him. Then, the CM of that time realized what he was saying. Then he said, "Who are you?" to me. I am Rajat Kalsan, yes. Then, "Oh you are Rajat Kalsan," stated the then CM Hooda. Yes, I am, I said. The Chief Minister then declared, "You have destroyed the harmony among the castes in Haryana by sowing discord among them." We're going to treat you rough. I then retorted, "What harshly would you deal with me? Cases have been framed against me. Go ahead and file more cases against me and push me behind the bars." The Chief

Minister, who belong to Jat community, have been treating us shabbily and intimidating the SC community.

Bhagana Kand Sangharsh Samiti's observation

As Ramphal Jangra, one among the 4 front-ranking functionaries of Bhagana Kand Sangharsh Samiti said, "We were in 'sit-in dharna' from 2012 to 2016 in Jantar Mantar to highlight the issue of 'Dalit repression' in Bhagana and justice denied to the victims of caste atrocities. In Bhagana, land became a contentious issue and Jat landholders used rape as an apparatus to humiliate dalits and their family.

On April 16, 2014, following gangrape of Dhanak girls in Bhagana by Jat boys in March 2014, 95 Dhanak families joined the 'sit-in dharna' demanding justice and compensation. Then, on June 4, 2014 on the first day of the Parliament session for the newly elected BJP government, the Delhi police forcibly evicted them from the dharna site along with other protestors sitting at Jantar Mantar. The police used brute force to drive away the protesters, ostensibly, for 'security concerns' in view of the upcoming session of Parliament. Some women activists from Delhi were also roughed up and were even hit on their private parts by the women police. But still the 'sit-in dharna continued till 2016.

Earlier, Congress-led Haryana Government tried to negotiate with the leaders of Bhagana Kand Sangharsh Samiti on social boycott imposed by Jats in Bhagana village which failed and remained inconclusive. Following it, PL Punia, the Chairman of the National Commission for Schedule Castes, stepped in and spoke with Dalit politician Ishwar Singh of the Congress, who then informed Sonia Gandhi, the head of the party, about the situation.

Initially, it was minor issue which began with Ambedkar Chowk, which had rechristened by the Dalits by the dominant caste, especially the Jats popularised it as "Chamar Chowk". Jats use the word "Chamar," a term that contains centuries of toxic prejudice and is also used as a derogatory caste classification. In Bhagana, it is used carelessly and shamelessly, particularly by the dominant Jat population, which accuses Dalits of intruding on their territory. The Jats have been targeting the Dalits in different ways, ranging from frustrating to brutal.

In 2012, the Jats of Bhagana claimed the area as its land and erected walls along the edges of the chowk, effectively blocking the entry to Dalit houses. It has been a meeting point where Dalits have been congregating for decades. The Chowk had a good reputation; if someone from outside Bhagana village needed directions, they were advised to head directly to the Chowk to get where they were going.

In 2011, a committee was formed by the Khap panchayat to redistribute Shamlat land²² – or common land that is to be used for the benefit of the entire village – of 280 killa²³ (280 acres) in Bhagana. The land was divided between Jat landholders only. Apparently, Jat landholders got 60 square yards each for every acre of land that they owned, whereas Dalits were asked to pay Rs 1,000 for the same area of land.

However, it would have been divided among dalits who were landless farmers, that would have been preferable. Jats, wielding more power were very cunning and skilled at manipulation, so when they came to know about it, then there was a race among them to grab it. They started with the children's playground, which measures between 2.5 to 3 killa giving a logic that it's a beautiful place and entry point from adjoining village, Ramayan. In 1966, the state was formed but still not a single school or college has been built in the area. Not even there is any market or a playground where children can play. The playground was on a Shamlat land and those children who used to play there had proven themselves once they had finished school. After following their school schedules, children got together, played, and chatted in a friendly environment that inspired them to pursue their education and careers. A few chose to join the police, army, or pursue other careers. Villagers, who belonged to other caste groups, besides Jats, felt that children belonging to Dalit community and backward castes were far ahead in education and getting jobs. Envious that their children were wasting their time in the fields, grazing cows and buffaloes, the Jats attacked and took possession of the playground, which has served as a source of motivation for children from the Dalit community and backward castes. The playground's users have tended to it well, cleaning and planting trees. Socially conscious villagers stepped up to support it based on their beliefs and trust, and they donated Rs. 10,000 for tree planting and Rs. 2000 for seating arrangements. It stemmed from the fact that it was admirable that children playing on the ground were not engaging in fights elsewhere; instead, they were coming directly to the ground after returning home from the school.

Influential Jat lobby targeting the playground enraged dalits and backward castes and they filed a complaint with the District Magistrate (DM) to get their hands on it. However, the administration did nothing; rather, it harassed and placed

²² Shamlat land refers to the common land in rural areas. Shamlat land is essentially community-owned land that is meant to be used for the benefit of the entire village or community. It's often used for common purposes such as grazing, collecting firewood, and other communal activities

²³ Killa is equal to 1 Acre and if it is a rectangular land then it is equal to the area enclosed in 220 ft (40 Karams) by 198 ft (36 Karams) of land. 1 Killa is also equivalent to 5 Bigha, 8 Kanals, or 1/25th of Murabba which are other prevalent traditional land area measurement units used in India.

pressure on the dalits, informing the Jats that a complaint had been made against them and demonstrating their inability to take any action against the wrongdoers.

To resolve the conflicts, the Jats called a Panchayat asking elderly and wise members of their community to attend. They also requested that the Dalits join the Panchayat. Dalits, however, have previously encountered bitterness anytime they attended the panchayat summoned by Jats. As a dominant caste with significant influence, the Jats have made mistakes but show no remorse. Whenever the Dalits participated, they were made to feel inferior and told to sit on the floor. As a result, I chose not to attend the panchayat that the Jats organised. The legality of the matter meant that it could not be resolved by the panchayats that the Jats have called. The majority of dalits were hesitant, somewhat vacillating, and had expressed interest in attending the panchayat that the Jats had called but I showed my annoyance.

Gamo Ram," Ramphal Jangra said "Gamo Ram," Bhagana village has long been home to Dalits and members of backward castes; Jats, in particular, have large agricultural holdings, well-paying occupations for their family members, and a fleet of tractors. The Jats live in large homes with lengthy alleyways. Dalits and the backward castes, on the other hand, reside in tiny hovels crammed into narrow alleyways. Let the Jats do as they choose; the entire burden rests on the dalits and backward castes, who are caught in the "Ram" and "Gamo" cycle. Encouraging the cause of the dalits and backward castes, our Sangharsh Samiti advised our seniors that it would be best if any of us—grandfather, uncle, or any other elderly relative—hung oneself or consumed poison and die then to participate in the panchayat summoned by Jats. We declined to take part in the Jat-called Panchayat. When the Dalits refused, the Jats were furious. The Jats were concerned by the response and determined to socially boycott the dalits as a result. When the "social boycott" was enforced, we 4-5 members of Bhagana Kand Sangharsh Samiti devised a plan and the next course of action after realizing that our refusal to participate in their panchayat would be misinterpreted as for centuries, the Jats, the dominant caste, had used a cunning tactic to oppress or exploit the marginalised particularly dalits and members of backward castes.

The shopkeeper in the village was told not to sell to us; the common village pond was denied to our buffaloes. No one would talk to us. We were not allowed to use barber shop, village cremation ground and temples. Even using transport to travel outside of the village was not allowed to us

The dominant Jats fined the dalits Rs 5000 for sitting in autorickshaws, going to the fields, or making grocery store purchases. The shopkeeper in Bhagana village was told not to sell anything to the Dalits. The common village pond was denied to Dalit's buffaloes. No one would talk to them. Dalits were not allowed to use barber shop, village cremation ground and temples. Even using transport to travel outside of the village was not allowed to Dalits. Dalits chose to inform the journalists from various media outlets in Hisar about the injustice that had been done to them, stating that their only remaining choice was to protest. Following the press meet, 250 families mobilised their meagre resources—cows, buffalo, goats, tractors, or mule-drawn carts and gathered vital food supplies, including cereals and grains, and they went to the mini Secretariat in Hisar to stage a "sit-in dharna" that lasted nearly a year.

We planned protests, and when the effigy of the then-chief minister, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, was burnt, a sedition case was filed against the Bhagana dalits. To intimidate and permanently subdue the protestors, a charge of sedition was brought against them. Our protest was to bring the rapists to court so that they would be scared, but instead of scaring them, the protestors were booked under 120 B. Congress, which was then the ruling party, sent its hatchet men to us with a conditionalities that if we withdrew our protest then they would get our comrades released from the jail. We agreed to the terms of the arrangement.

Upon the release of 10-12 of our comrades from jail, they were hijacked and whisked away to another location as we failed to know the background of the hatchet men sent by the Government. With the help of 1 or 2 of our comrades they began to negotiate with us that lasted until 2:30 am at midnight and threatened us to pick up our belongings and withdraw the sit-in dharna. We said that we haven't come with intention of staging any act of sedition and we are not going to withdraw the 'sit-in dharna' do whatever you can.

Our protestors, who went to jail have been released till then, why would we do it, we have only burnt the effigy in protest, we have not committed any vandalism, however here were some men from an NGO in Sirsa Road, claimed that they helped us with the mats, where we sat and conducted the 'sit-in dharna'. At around 2.30 a.m. in the midnight hours, these men pulled the mats on which infants aged 3 months sitting on mothers' lap and children aged up to 8 years sitting on it. Those who snatched the mats were all from the Dalit community and they operated like brokers as they got donations from the State Government. These brokers attempted to buy off the protestors in an effort to break their morale. The protestors responded aptly, saying, "You take away your mats; we don't need any

money." The fight for justice in Bhagana then took another turn. The Dalit community could now clearly see that Virender Singh Bhagoria, Jagdish Singh, Ramphal Jangra and Prof. Satish Kajla were the four who were leading the movement. What these four discuss and decide in the Sangharsh Samiti is put into practice.

However, 95 Dhanak families who joined in the "sit-in dharna" in Jantar Mantar, Delhi, in April 2014, demanding justice. Bhagana Kand Sangharsh Samiti found that when FIR would be lodged, only those proven guilty could be charged under the POSCO Act as 1-2 of the raped victims were minors. Bhagana Kand Sangharsh Samiti found that when FIR would be lodged, only those proven guilty could be charged under the POSCO Act because 1-2 of the raped victims were minors. To get FIR lodged the Dhanak families stayed for almost a month in Delhi, met political leaders, government officials and returned to their village after was lodged. The state government, which supported the Jats up to the Panchayat level, was well aware that if a FIR was filed and the offenders were not taken into custody, the "sit-in dharna" in Jantar Mantar or the mini secretariat would not stop.

Those Dhanak families, who were participating in the 'sit-in dharna' at the mini secretariat in Hisar for one-half to two years, hadn't gone to their home in Bhagana, their daughters were raped by Jat boys. It was in Delhi that the Dhanuk and Chamar community came together. In gangrape as well as in the land distribution cases, the offender was the Jat landholders.

The Jats sought to instil fear and quell the movement by intimidating and subjugating the Dalit girls, and gangraping them was another tactic to force them into compliance. This is how it happened in March 2014: in the night of March 23, four Dhanak girls went outside to relieve themselves, and five Jat boys grabbed them and smothered them. Girls recalled that the handkerchiefs used to muffle them had a distinct chemical odour. The girls were found at the Bhatinda railway station in Punjab, 170 kilometres away early the next morning.

It was found by Bhagana Kand Sangharsh Samiti that FIR would be lodged, then only culprits can be booked under POSCO Act as 1-2 girls among the rape victims were minor, however the matter got escalated and moved forward but the struggle continued. The rape victim's family got compensation from the Government, then they came under the pressure of Jats and they were asked to compromise. Fearing retribution from the Jats, these victim's family backtracked. Even yet, they thought they won't be able to mount a valiant defence against the Jats because of their

poverty. The victim's family disassociated themselves from the conflict that emboldened the perpetrators, and they were not within our jurisdiction. When the BJP took power in Haryana, they already had a plan in place to engineer riots across the country, sowing discord among the communities, undermine all institutions, particularly the education system, restrict workers' rights by enforcing labour cades, and deny farmers their right to the Minimum Support Price (MSP). They also planned to target Jantar Mantar, forcing protestors to flee and forcing them to disband "sit-in dharnas," so that the message would not reach the entire country. However, still many protestors in Hisar are still holding "sit-in" protests.

In March 2019, National Commission for Scheduled Castes directed the state government to rehabilitate the victim families and provide them land and their houses. But, has the rehabilitation been done? In February 2020, the High Court closed the case pertaining to the alleged gangrape as the court was informed that the accused in the case were acquitted.

Traveling 200 kilometres to join the struggle and had faced all kinds of hardships. Santosh of Bithmara village in Hisar lost her life on June 19, 2011, as a result of police repression during the people's resistance in Mirchpur. She raised her voice and was subjected to repeated lathi blows. Although her dead body was laying in the police van, government representatives misled the public into believing she was still alive. I was aware of her passing. In 2011, I spent 20 to 25 days incarcerated. I went immediately to Bithmara village after being freed from jail. Four police vans were after me, and I was once more brought into custody.

They locked me at Sadar police station of Uklana, then they put pressure on me. After arresting me, the police behaved me in most obnoxious way, making all false allegations and took the name of Teluram Jangra, who was a Congress functionary, the police asked me if I approach him, then I would be released. I told them don't release me, rather book me and send me to jail. I don't want to be released advocating for me. I asked the police personnel what's my crime? Santosh who died of police brutalities, after getting released I straight went to their home. Then the panchayat gathered and they collectively wrote that I was regularly in their touch and my relationship with the villagers were quite strong and I had not come with any evil intentions and I had come to the village to meet the family killed facing police atrocities," said Ramphal Jangra

What Bhagana Kand Sangharsh Samiti's says about Rajat Kalsan

On asking about Rajat Kalsan's involvement in the Dalit movement in Haryana Ramphal Jangra alleged, "Rajat Kalsan has a dual character Atrocities against Dalits were first perpetrated at Mirchpur, and subsequently in Bhagana. In Mirchpur, I had also experienced "Dalit repression," but I had bravely resisted it. I was booked planning protest against the oppression in Mirchpur. To participate in the struggle at Mirchpur, I used to travel 233 kilometres to Faridabad. I actively participated for building up a solidarity with the Dalits for taking it to a logical culmination, incessant blow with wooden sticks was rained on me by the Haryana police and I was booked by the police and put behind the bars. Continuous blows with wooden sticks rained on me had broken many of my bones. Several of my bones were fractured by the constant beatings I received from wooden sticks. When I was arrested, my children were very small, now they doing Post Graduation from Delhi University, those who take active part in the struggle, the impact of police's wooden blows makes them strong ant their wife and children are strong too, and fearless. My wife accompanied by my small children, in the cold winter, went to meet Rajat Kalsan, who is a lawyer by profession, for filing a bail application. My wife was carrying all the necessary documents, my wife requested him to file that, then Rajat Kalsan, who is also a Dalit activist, was so insensitive in his approach and he asked a fee of Rs 5000 for filing a bail application. 4 to 5 lawyers were also standing there at that moment, retorted back, pointing towards my wife, this lady accompanied by small children in this shivering cold, has travelled 200 kilometres and her husband, Ramphal Jangra, who belongs to OBC, has been jailed for participating in a Dalit struggle and for filing a bail application and you are asking for your fees. You should not charge fees from those who are fighting for a cause. Then we distanced ourselves from Rajat Kalsan. Then we stopped communicating with him”

Confirming this Suman Jangra, wife of Ramphal Jangra, who met Rajat Kalsan for her husband's bail said, “My husband was arrested and I was alone to take care of my children. When Jangra Saheb was lodged in Hisar jail for apply for his bail. A 40-year-old woman, Santosh, who was from Bithmara village, was participating in a protest against the atrocities of Dalits in Mirchpur died due to incessant blows of lathi rained on her, opposing the police repression, Jangra Saheb and many activists were arrested. For getting him released in bail, I had gone to Hisar to meet Rajat Kalsan, Balban, who is a ‘*munshi*’ in sessions court introduced me to Rajat Kalsan.” Then, I requested Rajat Kalsan to file a bail application for Ramphal Jangra and I said I was ready to submit it. Then he asked me to deposit Rs. 2,000

and later on Rs 3,000. Then, Balban intervened and said that this woman has travelled 200 kilometres away accompanied by small children and her husband, though being an OBC had participated against the Dalit repression in Mirchpur, how insensitive you are asking for a fee. Then, Praveen Ladoiya, an advocate got Jangra Saheb bail without charging a single paisa. Jangra Saheb also support from other lawyers in his struggle. The real face of Rajat Kalsan, who has been claimed as messiah of Dalits comes to the fore.”

"Praveen Ladoiya as a true legal practitioner continuously fought my case for 10 years without charging one paisa for ten years," Ramphal Jangra then stated. I travelled from Faridabad to Hisar whenever I had to appear in court, sometimes even twice or three times a month. Rajat Kalsan went to every place where Dalits were subjected to oppression—Mirchpur, Bhagana, Bithmara, Dabda—to have his pound of flesh. Even though he once supported Dalits in their legal battles, he has since changed. Profiting from his good works, he now attempts to present himself as the "messiah of Dalits" in an effort to gain as much advantage as possible. He is always engaged in negotiations in an effort to barter and sell it. He has been attempting to stop the Dalit families from joining the agitation while in negotiations with the State Government. Rajat Kalsan, in collusion with Vedpal Tanwar, who took part in the struggle and strengthened the nexus, attempted to undermine the Dalit movement.”

Dalit atrocities in South Haryana

While delineating on the atrocities over dalits in South Haryana, Kalsan said, “In the Ahirwal area of Haryana, scheduled castes suffer atrocities at the hands of Yadav. Recently in Gurugram, where a district magistrate who belongs to SC community was slapped by his subordinate clerk. In this instance, the police merely included sections 323 and 506 in the complaint rather lodging complaint under the SC/ST Act. In addition, a FIR was framed against the DM.”

Left parties and Scheduled Caste community in Haryana

Left parties’ attitudes regarding the SC community are extremely pessimistic and negative. My mother was very active in All India Democratic Women’s Association (AIDWA), CPI(M)’s women frontal organisation and hence it used to ignore her as she belongs to SC community, as observed by Rajat Kalsan. An activist from the SC community killed himself during the dharna while battling to grant Rohnat village in the Bhiwani district the designation of "martyr's village." A large number of villagers lost their lives in the revolt of 1857. When villagers took part in the 1857 rebellion, the British colonialists massacred them, took their land, and divided it

among the stooges. Since the creation of Haryana and in Independent India, state governments have pledged to return land confiscated from people fighting against British colonial rulers, as well as to give descendants of martyrs 57 plots in Hisar and the designation of Rohnat village as a "martyr's village." However, these promises have not been fulfilled. 80% of the 57 plots distributed went to members of the SC community whose ancestors had lost their lives fighting the Britishers. None of the community desires that these lands be awarded to SC community members. Ved Prakash, an activist from the SC community, had been on a sit-in dharna for a year and a half, but none of his requests had been met since it was not accomplished. In the end, he killed himself on September 15, 2020, and attributed his death to the DC, the DRO and the Qanungo for not providing the documents related to Rohnat village. Additionally, he claimed that my dead body would be shouldered by my villagers, a left party member, and a farmers' organisation representative following my death. Following the suicide of Ved Prakash, a panchayat was called. Representatives from farmers' organizations and left party typically don't attend this kind of gathering. We demanded that a section 306 FIR be made against DC, DRO, and Qanungo based on the suicide note, but the exact opposite of what we expected occurred. The leader of the left party and the farmers organisation representative objected to the filing of any FIR, but instead they settled on paying Ved Prakash's family Rs. 15-20 lakhs, which trivialised the whole problem. The DC, DRO, and Qanungo belonged to Jat community, as well as the leader of the left party and the representative of the farmers organization. The leaders of the left parties in Haryana are primarily Jats or Brahmins, with very negligible representation from the SC community," said Rajat Kalsan

As the BJP is in power at both the state and centre, the progressive forces are losing ground and finding it harder and harder to effect change. Sectarian and fissiparous forces are attempting to communally polarise, sow discord within the castes and even split the scheduled caste community. The retrogressive trend is widespread because the progressive forces are weaker. The state's left parties, whose leaders and activists still struggle with caste issues and need to grow, are weak for historical, sociological, economic and cultural reasons. Dalit organizations and groups must be included and welcomed into the trade union and farmers organisations, which still require strengthening. The same causes are also responsible for civic society's ongoing state of disarray.

Progressive social and cultural organisations need to trace their roots back to the 1857 uprising, when society came together along religious and caste lines to confront the British colonial masters. Furthermore, efforts must be made to enhance the progressive forces and civil society in the state. The administration in general, and the police in particular, will need to be educated on the importance of acting pro-actively to avert the atrocities on Dalits. *Khap Panchayats* run by

dominant caste, especially Jats need to be monitored and controlled.
