

Title: Dalit Activist's protest songs ring out at IITGn

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Ahmedabad: Shambhaji Bhagat, the revolutionary artist and dalit activist, who has strongly vocalized the issues of social justice pertaining to caste and class in contemporary India, performed at the Indian Institute Technology-Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) on Tuesday.

Before performing at IIT-Gn, on his maiden visit to Gujarat, Bhagat (58), who composed the music for 'Court', the movie nominated for the Academy Awards in 2015, spoke of how he got into songs of protests and termed Indian democracy as "being governed by a corporate dictatorship with Brahminical culture in a politically fascist way."

"I was the son of a landless labourer who was an out-caste according to the Hindu religion. I moved to Bombay, but the discrimination continued there too, as society did not treat us as human beings. I started singing at the age of 12. One day I saw some street play activists in Bombay and with my the leanings towards Ambedkarite ideology, I decided to make music my tool of protest," Bhagat told TOI.

Speaking about the form



Shambhaji Bhagat

of his protest songs, Bhagat said, "I have taken the ballad form to present revolutionary songs. In content, all of my songs are protest songs but are all about optimism." Bhagat said he started using folk songs as people connect with them easily. "I can express my protest through folk songs as it can be accepted by people easily. We have been doing it for 35 years. By changing constantly, we have come up with a form of neo-protest songs. This way we also succeeded in making a difference in society."

Bhagat went on to say: "My people comprising slum-dwellers, sanitation workers and labourers, are there to protect me. I keep getting threats from terrorist groups of different castes and religions and from different political views. I know I am not going to die and I am not going to be afraid."