

Farmers Are Tillers, Not Killers

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Kangana Ranaut again and again is attacking the Indian farmers as terrorists. She has done that in response to the world famous pop singer Rihanna and famous environmentalist girl Greta's support to farmers movement. Sachin Tendulkar and other pro-BJP forces also joined the chorus. Most of these forces are pro-monopoly houses and hardly have any engagement with the agrarian production.

One's own social location in terms of caste plays a key role in taking stands when the farmers of India and the business and industrial houses are on the course of conflict. International expressions cannot be judged based on convenience. In a globalised world international opinions get expressed on many things. In fact the BJP/RSS mobilized international opinions in their favour on many occasions. Such international opinions were expressed during the anti-rape Nirbhaya agitation and the RSS/BJP combine was very happy and welcomed such global opinions coming in since those opinions were against the Congress Government at that time. The farmers issue is a massive survival issue of the whole nation itself. I have never in my life time experienced such massive agitation by farmers. What do Sachin Tendulkar and Kangana kind of people know about agriculture? Particularly Kangana Ranaut's language against farmers has shocked the whole world, not just the nation.

It is a well known fact that Kangana is a Ksatriya arrow left on the Indian Shudra farmers by Yogi Adithyanath. I say this with conviction because the agitating farmers mostly are Shudras and the Ksatriyas as a community did not put its hand on the plough, in their historical existence, though they own estates of land. They treat tilling land below their community status. Quite interestingly the Jats of Uttar Pradesh are in the lead of the movement at present under the leadership of Rakesh Tikait, who is a son of the famous Mahendra Singh Tikait. Even then Kangana says the same thing that she was saying against Punjab farmers linking this agitation to Khalistan. The caste system makes many of the policy decisions biased. There is a clear divide between the agrarian production and the business networks that want to make business and make profits around agrarian produce. Farmers have never evolved into a business community in India. Even the high end agriculturist communities like Kamma, Reddy, Velama, Kapu, Lingayat, Jat, Gujjar, Yadav, Maratha and so on did not get into high end monopoly businesses. The high end business is mainly in the hands of national Banias, Brahmins, Kayathas, Khatri. Of late Ksatriyas are also entering into business. The farmers' fears get compounded because of this caste divide also.

Kanagana, who characterises the food producers comes from a family that never tilled an acre of land and never sowed a seed and produced a ton of grain. She comes from a horse

riding and knife wielding family heritage. Perhaps she has not seen how a farmer's furrow germinates the plant that becomes the source of life blood of all others in the country while living in a mansion in Himachal Pradesh.

There is a fine Telugu folk song that has become a trend setter on youtube written by a Telugu writer Asta Gangadhar 'Raithu (farmer) the Legend' and sung by Relare Ganga, which broadly goes as follows:

O farmer you are our hero

O farmer you are our legend

O farmer you produce food from the mud

Unless you produce food computers cannot work

Unless you produce food the robots do walk

Unless you produce food the soldier cannot fire a gun

Kangana calls this farmer who is the real hero of the nation and real legend of the nation, a terrorist repeatedly. She does not seem to read or hear what is said and written about her daily attack on farmers.

Why did the international response come even after so many days of farmer agitation against the new farm laws? A tribal environmentalist young girl from North East India called Kangujam, who is just nine, gave a call to the world to respond to the suffering farmers in the cold, in corona pandemic in the open on Delhi borders. They are facing police lathis, barricades along with insufficient food and water.

Kangujam tweeted, "Dear friends, our millions of poor farmers sleeping in the streets in this cold weather don't expect anything from you. Just your one tweet of love and support /solidarity to their cause means a lot to them. Our Indian celebrities are lost!"

This appeal of our own environmentalist young Adivasi girl invoked responses from many global celebrities including


Rihanna who said in her hashtag tweet "Why aren't we talking about this farmers' protest" with a picture of Indian farmers living in the cold on the Delhi border. This led to a series of tweets.

Greta Thunberg said "We stand in solidarity with the farmers protest in India"

Actress and Instagram influencer Amanda Cerny too showed her support:

She said:

"The world is watching. You don't have to be Indian or Punjabi or South Asian to understand the issue. All you have to do is care about humanity. Always demand freedom of speech, freedom of press, basic human and civil rights-

equity and dignity for workers.  [#FarmersProtest](#) [#internetshutdown](#)"

Kanagana said in her tweet in response to these international tweets, they “are not farmers but terrorists who are trying to divide India”. She not only repeatedly slut shamed Rihanna in a series of tweets, Ranaut also called Thunberg a “dumb and spoilt brat”. Kangana’s response must be seen in the background of the BJP Government trying to project the farmers movement as Khalistani terrorist movement. For the first time in six years Modi rule a political blunder has been committed. He went after farmers who voted the BJP to power twice. His Government and party also do not stop such a miscalculated attack on the farmers. Why should the Government of India become very sensitive to individual criticism from abroad? As I said such a criticism came more than this when Nirbhaya rape agitation took place in Delhi.

The narrative of farmers getting attacked as terrorists is certainly making the organic intellectuals coming from the agrarian family background who write in every regional language their own songs, stories and novels. The farmers agitation has inspired a new genre of writing, singing and dancing in the villages. The farmer terrorist language is infuriating them. That will have its fall out sooner or later.

Social media cuts both ways. In one particular stage it worked in the RSS/BJP favour. But now the narrative is changing. Farmer is too much of a nationalist to be brandished as terrorist or anti-national.

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*The author is a political theorist, with an upcoming new book *The Shudras — Vision for a New Path* co-edited with Karthik Raja Karuppusamy (Penguin).*

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