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Dalits watch Rahul yatra

as Rahul looked on before he asked her about her land. Still in purdah, she unleashed a tirade against the rule of Dalits saying it had hurt the interests of Brahmins. Another villager said how Brahmins were not heard even in police stations.

If the first two days of his yatra were spent in Brahmin-dominated villages, today he visited the Dalit-dominated village of Kripalpur in Aligarh. Addressing a meeting there, he said: "Land is being snatched of every farmer, irrespective of caste — Jat, Dalits, OBCs. You farmers are not united. Is pradesh ko dalal chala rahe hain." (This state is being run by dalals)

Later, he spent nearly half an hour at Rambhool's, an SC family in Kansera village, before taking a four-hour rest at Kalyan Singh's, a Jat home. Kalyan Singh gave 12 bighas for Rs 4.36 lakh per bigha.

"First, four persons came and asked — Rahul Gandhi ayenge to unke liye chaar cup chay bana dogi. Then he came with his team," said Anita, daughter of Rambhool.

"Most land in the area is with Jats and Brahmins. Jatavs have mostly land given on pattas. This is either too little, or falls on the other side of the Expressway. Not many of SCs lost land for the Expressway," said Ajay Kumar, Rambhool's son.

The BSP said Rahul's campaign would not dent the party's Dalit base. "In Bhatta Parsaul (from where he began his the padyatra), he only visited Brahmin families. He makes only a token visit to Dalits," Gautam Buddha Nagar MP Surendra Nagar said. "After the Tappal firing last year, he (Rahul) promised an amended law for land acquisition. Where is that? Who is preventing the UPA government to introduce new land acquisition law," said Nagar.

Yesterday, Gandhi's first halt was at Sabota at around 7.30 am after he spent the night at Kalicharan Sharma's home in Rampur Bangar village. He had an afternoon siesta at Ramveer Sharma's home in Alavalpur village who said, "Devta ghar padhare." Later, Rahul visited Panditon Ka Nagla.

Mundra, a Dalit woman, was among the crowd at a Rahul meeting, said she did not get a chance to speak. "I tried to raise my voice but no one gave me the mike," said Roomali, a Kumhar woman, who sold five bighas to the government. Imarati, a Jatav, said: "Only powerful have voices."

Rahul's refrain for all is: "Aapke sath anyaya hua hai, main aapko insaaf dilvaoonga." (There has been injustice, I will ensure justice for you).

Asked if he can influence the policy at the Centre, his aide accompanying him said: "He is undertaking the yatra as he wanted to understand the issue."

Rahul on the road on Thursday. OINAM ANAND

Dalits watch Rahul yatra

From the margins, Dalits watch Rahul yatra

LAND ISSUE ■ UP being run by *dalals*, says Rahul, as landowners attack, abuse Maya

ASHUTOSH BHARDWAJ
ALIGARH, JULY 7

THE Bahujan Samaj Party is seeking comfort in the fact that Rahul Gandhi's walkabout doesn't touch many Dalit homes. In fact, all along his Kisan Sangharsh Yatra focusing on farmland acquired by the UP government along the Yamuna Expressway, you have to search hard to find affected Dalit landowners.

Most of the landowning farmers who show up to support Rahul are Jats and Brahmins and they slam Dalits and UP Chief Minister Mayawati in openly casteist language. All in the presence of Rahul and his entourage.

For example, during an early morning meeting at a temple in Brahmin-dominated Sabota village in Gautam Budh Nagar yesterday, a woman in *purdah* suddenly came forward and grabbed the mike. "*Bolne ke liye sabhi maangti hun. Jabse Mayawati aayi hai, ch***** (a derogatory reference to Dalits) *ko sinhasan par bitha diya hai.* (I seek forgiveness for speaking up... but ever since Mayawati has taken charge, Dalits have been made to sit on the throne."

There were loud cheers

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