Twitter Thread by Good Governance ■■



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The Farm Law Protests mask the Blatant Inequality of Rural Punjab where Dalit farm labour derisively known as seeri are oppressed.

If these poor labour demand any pay increase, they are boycotted by landlords often with collusion of district administration.

When these labourers start demanding pay increments, the landlords rain down on them with majoritarian might. Any collective action is crushed with village-wide “boycotts.”

The boycotted Dalit farm labour of Punjab are unable to procure sauda, the household supplies. Milk becomes out of reach, so does fodder for the precious livestock. They are barred from using the common shamlatland for grazing the paltry cows and goats which they own.

In village Mahan Singh Wala, this rural apartheid was announced by the gurdwara. In places like Amirke, Faride Wala, Dhotian, Sardarpura, Gandav, Sakohan, Lehra Khana and Khiva Khurd, the labourers either faced violence or had to walk miles to procure the household supplies.

All these boycotts were recorded within a matter of few months in the year 2012.

In fact, over time, this has become a time-tested political strategy in rural Punjab and such boycotts could potentially last for years.

As recently as June 2020, dozens of panchayats of Southern Punjab issued a similar “diktat” to enforce a wage ceiling. Resistance was met with violence and threats.

The discrimination also acquires a more sinister hue when the Dalits are barred from entering the gurdwaras, performing seva and, in the case of village Sur Singh, even offered amrit from a separate utensil during the baptism ceremony

This act was recorded in the oldest Sikh seminary originally established by the sixth Guru and a petition with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes was filed.

Resultingly, the Dalits have moved out of the Sikh fold in droves, “converting” to Ravidassia, Ad-dharmi and Christian faiths.

At the heart of it, the issue is purely socioeconomic but has become irreversibly political and religious now.

Punjab’s agriculture has been unsustainable for ages and only survives on state subsidies. Labour cost, succumbing to the caste dynamics, is the easiest thing to curtail, so the landlords run amok. The whole agrarian system requires a major shakeup.

Source of the above thread

An article from Wire titled
"The Farm Law Protests Could Whitewash the Blatant Inequality of Rural Punjab"