

Dalit Theatre of Haryana

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Haryanvi Dalit theatre occupies a highly marginalised position within the broader landscape of Indian theatre. It may aptly be described as “the marginalised among the marginalised,” as it has remained largely excluded from both mainstream theatre studies and Dalit cultural historiography. Haryanvi Dalit Swang theatre was active long before the Dalit Panther Movement, but it received little attention due to its lack of publication and translation into English. This book seeks to recover, document, and critically examine the neglected legacy of Haryanvi Swang, with particular emphasis on its Dalit traditions and practitioners, thereby contributing to a more inclusive understanding of Indian theatrical heritage.

Classical Dalit writers (Kalidas), mythical characters (Sarabri), and nationalists (Subhas Chandra Bose) occupy a particularly important place in full-fledged theatrical performances of Dayachand Mayna. Chadarlal Badi wrote and performed the famous play *Heer Ranja* to celebrate a Punjabi legendary love story. Fauji Prem Singh introduced historical Dalit icons such as Jhalkari Bai, the first Dalit woman martyr in the Revolt of 1857; Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule, pioneers of education and reform; BR Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, and, lastly, Kanshi Ram, an influential political leader who advocates Bhaujan empowerment. However, such Dalit talents fall outside the purview of academic research.

The importance of Dalit theatre is evident in the fact that, whether during World War I and II, or during the wars with Pakistan and China, it is used to recruit soldiers and to spread a sense of nationalism among the masses. Despite all these achievements of Haryanvi Dalit theatre, it has largely been excluded from mainstream theatre studies and from Dalit cultural historiographies such as those of Maharashtra, Bengal, and others. The foremost reason for its marginalisation is that these authors paid little attention to publication until it began in the late 1990s. Second, Haryana is rejected on the grounds of its harsh language; third, Haryanvi is not the national language. Hence, it did not receive government support to fund its theatre artists, especially those from Dalit communities. Out of three, non-publication harm does the most.

Most of Haryana's Dalit swang is in oral form, and its preservation and publication have benefited from the sustained efforts of scholars and cultural activists such as Archaya Shilal Ram (Kurukshetra University, Haryana) and Ramphal Chahal (Independent researcher). Their efforts enabled neglected Dalit writers like Chadarlal Badi and Baje Bhagat, as well as others, to enter academic discourse. Their efforts are strengthened by Devender Kumar (Benaras Hindu University), who promotes the digitalisation of long-forgotten Haryanvi Jakri and Kolu songs, the genres that have considerably less academic attention than Ragni. Similarly, Rajendar Badgujar (Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Bihar) has drawn critical attention to the phenomenon of “Chaapktaiya” by publishing the works of Dayachand Mayna. This term, which means the theft of a writer's work and its publication under another's name, is further cemented in the translation of Kashyap Deepak (Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Bihar), showing how Dalit theatre's popularity extended to regional cinema and Bollywood like *Matru ki Bijli ka Mandola* (2013), *Sanjhi* (1986), as well as in National Award-winning movie, *Laado*, (2000) but without giving credit to original authors. In addition, Haryana Sahitya Academy not only publishes the works of Dalit theatre writers but has instituted the

Baje Bhagat Award (2013) and the Lok Kavi Dayachand Mayna Samman (2021) in their honour.

This book is an attempt to document and rediscover the neglected history of Dalit Swang tradition and how it became a medium for articulating the Dalit identity by persevering alternative histories and challenging dominant narratives long before the Dalit Panther movement was born. By writing on this neglected part of literature, this book seeks to establish Haryana's Dalit Swang as significant yet overlooked in Indian academia.

Possible Themes:

- Rise of Dalit Theatre in Haryana
- Dalit Ragnis
- Jakri and Kolhu Songs
- Nationalism in Dalit Swang
- Amebdkar and Kashi Ram in Dalit Theatre
- Nationalism of Dalits
- Dalit Soldiers in War
- Dalit Aesthetics
- Dalit jokes from Theatre
- Manuscript preservation and publication
- Digital archive and digitalisation
- Dalit Political icons
- Problem of Translation
- Problem of *Chaapkttaiya* (literary heist)
- Theory

Kindly send an **Abstract of 250** words at deepak@mgcub.ac.in by **Sep 15, 2026**

Although most sources are in regional languages or in Hindi, yet here are some possible English sources:

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