

JAN SATYAGRAHA



March for Justice

November 2012 | After the march

2012



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A WORD AFTER THE MARCH

The Jan Satyagraha march ended with an agreement between the Government of India and tens of thousands of poor and landless people. What a victory for those seeking justice! The National Land Reform Task Force was constituted, made up of government administrators and civil society groups and gave six months time to put together a comprehensive policy with the state governments. As well there was the intention to draft two laws on minimal holding rights both for purposes of shelter and subsistence farming as well as to strengthen existing legal guarantees for protecting the tribal communities.

The key aspects of this agreement were *restoring* land that was forcibly and illegally seized; *protecting* land rights of those that have special status to the land (such as tribal or dalit landholders), *distributing* land to those that are without shelter or land for subsistence; and helping to *develop* the land to ensure that the back-bone of small farm holders remains significant within the rural economy.

How the whole non-violent Jan Satyagraha march ended --with ongoing dialogue and cooperation, is worthy of study and replication. At this too when the government was in direct confrontation with other movements, that were not able to achieve this possibility. What made this poor people's movement different? The ongoing mobilization and solidarity prepared people for dialogue, not simply spontaneous protest. Such preparation requires material and moral support.

The writing of letters to the Prime Minister, along with forty or so programs that went on simultaneously in Europe, either as foot-marches, meals or discussion groups, is an incredible part of the Jan Satyagraha story. In addition some people braved the trip to India in spite of difficulties in participating in the program, getting visas and so forth. For those that did not come or those who came after the 11th October to find that everything had been wound-up, were happy that the conclusion of this social action with the government was satisfactory.

The two Swiss cyclists that came all the way to Tashkent, or the two women who weathered the trip on the back of buses from France to India (with a big detour through China) came away satisfied in spite of their being dogged by some many difficulties. The many filmmakers that recorded the yatra; or those who ran the photo exhibitions, or did the photography, or the many journalists covering the yatra, emboldened the marchers and strengthened their sense of purpose. We also cannot forget those who collected resources for making the program a grand success. Email traffic also indicated that there were also many people who followed on the internet and who appreciated the non-violence and gave middle-class opinion-makers, a sense that the yatra was newsworthy.

Jill Carr-Harris & P.V. Rajagopal

JAN SATYAGRAHA IN VIDEO

All along the way to Agra, the media team of Jan Satyagraha followed the march to witness the action. The result is a set of short videos recounting day by day the long journey of the thousands marchers. See the video of October 11th, date of the signature of the agreement in Agra : [Victory of Land Struggle](#) (in the menu under the video, you can select subtitles in English or French). All the videos will be soon available on our website www.ektaparishad.com.



The Right to Land for Shelter, join the online discussion !

The Right to Land for Shelter is a globally unique governance assurance and an important step to fight poverty. It is one of the key-achievements of the Jan Satyagraha 2012. We want to discuss it with you!!! According to you, what is the potential of this right to create better living conditions for the poorest of the poor? What is its potential to decrease poverty? How should it be implemented in order to have the intended effect? Is there a global need for the Right to Land for Shelter?

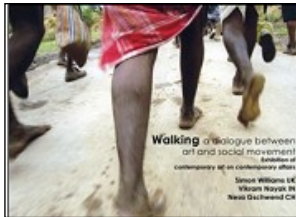
Join the online discussion and share your ideas → www.landportal.info

For further questions contact: marie@organisehumanevents.com | dmkpauli@googlemail.com



THE FORCE OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

The success of Jan Satyagraha is due to the force of poor and marginalised people of India, who prepared and carried out the march from Gwalior to Agra. It is also due to the force of youth, who took a huge part in the process, and to the force of non-violence which is the base of mobilisation. Along with these three elements, another has to be mentioned, that is the force of solidarity. In India and in the world, thousands of people raised their voice and took action to support the march. Activists promoted Jan Satyagraha in forum, festivals and meetings. They raise funds, alerted the public, the authorities and the medias. In Europe, more than 20 marches have been organised this year. On September 15th, The Meal gathered hundreds of people in 33 cities in Asia, Africa, Middle-East and Europe. Various artists — photographers, painters, musicians... — used their talents to raise awareness through exhibitions and concerts. This huge mobilisation was a great support for the marchers in India, and it participated in the success of Jan Satyagraha. Review in pictures (not exhaustive!) of this amazing international support :



Exhibition in Delhi, Sept-Oct.



The Meal in Benin, September 15th



Madras Café, UK, July



March Cruseilles-Geneva, Switzerland, September

Conference at European Parliament, May



March Montpellier-Carcassonne, France, Sept.



The Meal in Germany, September 15th



March Le Croisic-Paris, France, October



The Meal in Spain, September 15th

« If you are not indifferent, the world will be different ». The appeal of P.V. Rajagopal has been largely heard ! Thank you !

THE SITUATION ONE MONTH AFTER THE VICTORY,

Even if the signature of the ten-points agreement is an undeniable success for the thousands of marchers and all those who supported them, the coming months will be a critical period for its effective implementation, and it requires a careful follow-up. In this regard, several actions took place since October 11th :

- ✓ 14 October: the Minister of Rural Development, Mr. Jairam Ramesh, sent the ten-points agreement to all Chief Ministers.
- ✓ 17 October: a pre-task force meeting took place in Delhi. On this occasion, the list of actions to be taken has been drawn up, with a convenor nominated for each action.
- ✓ 22 October: the government issued the first notification of the task force with the list of its members. It includes representatives of the government and representatives of civil society. P.V. Rajagopal and Ramesh Sharma of Ekta Parishad are members of the task force.
- ✓ 29-30 October: A meeting of social activists was called by Ministry of Rural Development along with Ekta Parishad for drafting the detailed as well as State specific advisories on (a) Land Access to Poor and Marginalized (b) Women Land Rights (c) Land Rights to Nomad (d) Forest Rights Act, 2006 (e) PESA Act 1996.
- ✓ 6-9 November: Meetings for submission of state specific advisories to Ekta Parishad have been organised in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa.
- ✓ 15 November: finalisation of Advisories and Directives.
- ✓ 21 November: Meeting of the task force to examine and issue the Advisories and Directives to the concerned states.

When Time has come...

Since more than 2 years, I have the pleasure and privilege to be part of Ekta Parishad and to work on this newsletter. I am now going back to France, and there is too much to say in one paragraph ! So I will simply express my deep gratitude to all the people - working in the movement or supporting it - that I met during these two years. Their struggle, carried out with determination and courage, showed me the power of the poorest and the power of non-violence, and made me understand what means to be an activist. Their support allowed me to live an amazing experience beside them, which will guide me in my future commitments, in France or elsewhere. Jai Jagat !

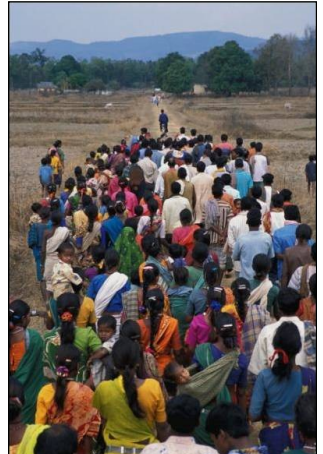
Altaï de Saint Albin



STORY OF A LONG STRUGGLE

The agreement signed on October 11th is the result of a long struggle. Since its beginning in 1991, Ekta Parishad works on issues related to access to land and livelihood resources. In 1999, the movement started to carry state and national non-violent actions, which will lead to the Jan Satyagraha.

States Yatra. From 1999 to 2005, Ekta Parishad organised foot-marches in different states, each one lasting for one to six months : Madhya Pradesh (1999-2000), Bihar (2001), Chambal region (2002), Chhattisgarh (2003), Orissa (2004), Jharkhand (2004), Tamil Nadu and Kerala (2005). These actions permitted to reinforce advocacy towards states and districts administrations.



In Niwas Khar, Chhattisgarh., 2005.



A woman showing her land title, Ummaria dist, M.P., Nov. 2010.

Janadesh Chetawani Yatra (Warning March). In 2006, Ekta Parishad scaled-up its action, moving from the state to the national level, with the objective to raise the issue of landlessness and deprivation to the central government. In October 2006, 500 leaders of Ekta Parishad walked from Gwalior to Delhi to warn the government that 25000 people would come to Delhi the next year if no action was taken.

Janadesh (People's Verdict). Exactly one year after the warning to the government, on 2nd October, 2007, 25000 people took the road and covered the 350 km distance from Gwalior to Delhi. They reached the national capital on October 27th, where the government finally agreed to the demands of the marchers. It created a National Land Reform Council and a National Land Reform Committee to find solutions on land issues, and in January 2008, the Forest Rights Act came into force. 11 marchers lost their lives during Janadesh.

Chetawani Rally (Warning Rally). After Janadesh, thousands of people received land titles. Nowadays, millions of adivasis, dalits, small farmers, fisher folks and other marginalised communities of India continue to be deprived from their land and livelihood resources. The National Land Reform Council, chaired by the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, didn't meet a single time in four years. Ekta Parishad started to plan a new large-scale action, and engage the process of preparation by organising trainings in villages. From March 6th to 8th, 2011, 125000 leaders stayed in the Ramleela Ground, a large place in Delhi, to give a new warning to the government: if no action is taken, 100 000 people would come to Delhi on October 2012. This would be Jan Satyagraha.



March to the Parliament, Chetawani Rally, Delhi, March 7th, 2011

Jan Samwad Yatra (People's dialogue Trip). On October 2nd, 2011, P.V. Rajagopal and a team of social activists started the Jan Samwad Yatra : in one year, they travelled through 350 districts of India, meeting people struggling for their rights, to understand their plight and mobilise them for Jan Satyagraha. During all this time, P.V. Rajagopal alerted the decision-makers and media on the situation he witnessed on the ground, urging central and states governments to act.



March Jan Satyagraha 2012, October 2012.

Jan Satyagraha (People's desire for truth). During the Jan Samwad Yatra, but mainly after it, the central government showed a will to negotiate with Ekta Parishad and the organisations joining Jan Satyagraha. Several meetings took place at the end of September 2012, with the Minister of Rural Development, the Prime Minister of India, the Revenue Ministers, etc. An agreement was to be signed on October 2nd 2012, start of Jan Satyagraha, but the government finally stepped back, refusing to commit on a written document. On October 2nd, 2012, more than 35000 people gathered in Gwalior, and started to walk in direction to Delhi on the 3rd. After 10 days, the government agreed to sign a 10 points agreement which should lead in the next 6 months to important measures to ensure rights to shelter and rights to land to millions of people in India. Work is not over for Ekta Parishad and partners organisations of Jan Satyagraha. Implementation of the agreement needs a close follow-up, and activists need to stay ready to march again if needed. Field workers continue their work in villages, in search of social justice.