

JAN SATYAGRAHA



March for Justice

October 6th, 2012 | On the road

2012



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BEFORE THE MARCH: MOBILISATION AND NEGOTIATIONS

On the first day of October in Gwalior, one could see large groups of people walking on the road side, from the railway station towards the Mela Ground, waving their flags and shouting slogans for people's rights to land and livelihood resources. Within the space of a few days, thousands of people from all over India got off various trains, often after a long trip, and joined the starting point of the march. At the Mela Ground, workers were actively preparing the place to welcome the Satyagrahis (marchers of the Jan Satyagraha); and a meeting place with a large stage under a white tent, with toilets and coloured carpets on which the satyagrahis sat for many hours. Each satyagrahi was welcomed at the registration point, where they received a registration card a bag, a flag and a sheet. Those in charge of logistics directed people to the place in which food and utensils were stored and distributed. In every part of the Mela Ground, one could see a meeting going on, water tankers and vehicles, people talking, cooking, singing, dancing and carrying out various tasks. Leaders of the Jan Satyagraha, led by P.V. Rajagopal, were negotiating with the government on a national land reform agenda. At the end of the Jan Samwad Yatra from September 19th, the government responded favourably to the demands of Jan Satyagraha, and several meetings took place in the last week of September. After Rajagopal spoke to all Revenue Ministers, there was a negotiated roadmap that was worked out with the Jan Satyagraha and Rural Development Ministry; and this was followed with a meeting with the Prime Minister. It seemed that there was the political will in the central government for a land reform agenda.



Workers preparing the Mela Ground, Gwalior, Sept. 30th, 2012

OCTOBER 2ND : THE SATYAGRAHIS MEET AT THE MELA GROUND



At the Mela Ground, Gwalior, October 2nd, 2012

October 2nd, 2012, Anniversary of Gandhi and International Day of Non-Violence was the starting date of Jan Satyagraha. Initially, the marchers were supposed to take the road on this day, but as the hectic negotiations with the government looked positive, the march of the day was replaced by a big meeting to listen to the proposal of the government and to decide what to do next. People gathered in the morning at the central stage of the Mela Ground. P.V. Rajagopal welcomed the marchers and many dignitaries and guests from around the world. He reminded the audience that Jan Satyagraha is a struggle "for dignity, security and identity", focused on two main demands: a new national land reform policy to guarantee access to land and natural resources for food supply, and a law establishing the right to shelter.

His speech was followed by contributions of well-known Gandhians, such as S.N. Subba Rao, Bal Bhai, and Radha Batt, who recalled the legacy of Gandhi and the necessity for the government to respond to the genuine non-violent struggles. Subba Rao insisted on

the fact that "poor people want life with dignity and social justice, not just a full stomach". Senior leader of Ekta Parishad, Ramesh Sharma detailed the demands of Jan Satyagraha. Among the 19 demands addressed and discussed with the government, the main ones are to formulate a land reform policy and to pass a law ensuring that every homeless family get homestead land. Among other claims are a real and effective implementation of laws in favour of Adivasis like the Forest Rights Act, setting-up of fast track courts to address land issues of poor people, equal rights to land for women and men.

Tensions mounted as the Minister of Rural Development Mr. Jairam Ramesh took the microphone. His response to the demands of Jan Satyagraha, which had been the focus of intense negotiations, was awaited with great interest. Would the government make a commitment to the "road map" that had been discussed during the past days, and if yes, allow the marchers to celebrate the event?

Jairam Ramesh pointed out that while the government was committed to undertaking the long overdue agenda of land reform, and the government could not fully agree with all the demands, particularly because land distribution are mainly issues to be solved at the state level. However, he promised a draft for a national land reform policy within 6 months time, which could then be discussed and finalized. As part of this, 2.5 million people should get legal rights to land. The food security and land acquisition bill currently under consideration would provide further benefits and housing rights legislation was also planned. He also pointed out that the government had been given land titles to 1.1 million households in forest areas over the last five years. The Minister ended, emphasizing that while not all the demands could be implemented, he personally was in full agreement. He mentioned October 11th as the next main negotiation day where all of the Jan Satyagraha organizations could meet with national and state government representatives in order to develop an implementation list. And further two to three weeks would be needed to implement the list.

Following the speech of Jairam Ramesh, Ekta Parishad leadership and representatives of the organizations supporting Jan Satyagraha met to decide on their response to the government's offers. Just two hours later, P.V. Rajagopal returned to the stage, announcing that they were disappointed about the vague statements made by the government, which did not follow the road map discussed in earlier negotiations. He also mentioned that there were clearly problems getting the march underway as there is a limited food to feed people for the next ten days. Additional donations would have to be found thereafter. At this juncture P.V. Rajagopal asked the people to raise their flags, if they felt the march should go ahead as planned. A sea of green and white flags filled the air immediately. The verdict was clear. Jan Satyagraha will get on its way, with the marchers taking to the road towards Delhi on October 3rd at 7am.



At the Mela Ground, Gwalior, October 2nd, 2012



HELP THE MARCHERS TO REACH DELHI

Jan Satyagraha is on its way, and the marchers are supposed to reach Delhi on October 28th. Even if they get only one small breakfast and one meal per day, there is still a lack of food. The stock collected before the march is sufficient for ten days only. Every rupee collected is one more path to Delhi. To make a donation: www.ektaeurope.org/jan-satyagraha-2012/donations
Thank you for your support ! Jai Jagat !

OCTOBER 3RD AND 4TH, SATYAGRAHIS TAKE TO THE ROAD

Early morning, the Mela Ground was full of activity. Each group of Satyagrahis (there are 75 groups) were getting ready, standing in lines for the beginning of the march. As the march began only on the 2nd October, the marchers had to travel 22 kilometres to the camp ground and this too under the burning sun. Nonetheless, their determination didn't fail, and they joined the night point in Muradabad around 4 pm. Some of the participants of Jan Satyagraha stayed back in order to clean the Mela Ground of Gwalior, where people had been gathering since the end of September in order to prepare for the march.



March Jan Satyagraha, Madhya Pradesh, October 3rd, 2012

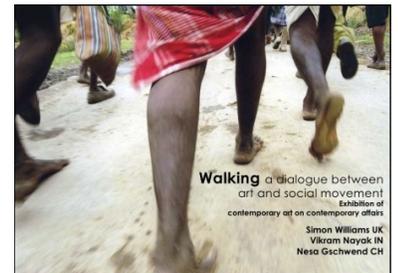
On the 4th, the march started around 8 am with the objective to cover 12 kilometres to join Morena. Several times during the morning, the marchers had the good surprise to be encouraged by school children and students standing on the roadside. Children gave written messages to P.V. Rajagopal, asking him to continue his struggle for land, forest and water. It is great to see youngsters aware of the issues of marginalised communities and willing to support the non-violent struggle! Many journalists are coming to the march, interviewing P.V. Rajagopal and other activists.

At the beginning of the afternoon, the satyagrahis reached the place where they will stay for the night. Group numbers are written on the asphalt to indicate where each group will spend the night. The cooking teams, arrived on the spot few hours before the marchers, are preparing the meal: rice, chapatti or puris, depending on the taste of the region of each group. After the meal, people sleep, discuss, bath and wash their clothes directly from the water tankers. Then they will be ready for another night on the road.

BEFORE THE MARCH, IN DELHI : CONFERENCE, EXHIBITION AND AWARD

A three-day workshop on "The Political and Cultural Aspects of Non-violent Action" (AHIMSA, the Hindi word for non-violence) involved about 40 people from different states from Asia, Africa, Latin/ North America and Europe. Taking place in Delhi from 27th to 29th of September, it advanced many viewpoints on non-violence and this led the group to endorse the valuable contribution being made by the Jan Satyagraha to show that non-violence works.

The three-day event ended with a public lecture, a dance program and the opening of an exhibition at the Indian Habitat Centre (Delhi). The exhibition entitled "Walking: a dialogue between art and social movement". Brought together the works by three artists (Simon Williams - UK, Nesa Geschwend - Switzerland and Vikram Nayak - India) exploring their understanding of the Gandhian inspired land rights movement Ekta Parishad. This exhibition will be shown in Delhi until October 10th. There was also a contemporary dance using Choi tribal form by Samya, a troupe choreographed and directed by well-known dancer, Santhosh Nair. Both the exhibition and the dance brought out an artistic expression of the struggle of social movements of the landless poor.



The public lecture brought together speakers such as Achan Sulak Sivaraksha, leader of the network of Engaged Buddhists from Thailand, Kamala Bhasin, feminist and south Asian trainer, Senior Gandhian S.N. Subba Rao, and well-known social activist, Swami Agnivesh. The audience was addressed by the Minister of Rural Development, Mr. Jairam Ramesh; he gave a short address on the ongoing discussion between the Indian Government and Jan Satyagraha on the land reform agenda. He pointed to the importance of resolving the long-standing and contentious land rights issues in India and he said that he would commit himself to come to Gwalior on October 2nd with some specific answers to the people's grievances.



Silvan Fedier, of the International Human Rights Society, gives the Human Rights Award 2012 to Rajagopal, Delhi, Sept. 30th

The event was also the occasion for the Swiss section of the International Human Rights Society to dedicate the Human Rights Award 2012 to PV Rajagopal, "in recognition of his dedicated engagement and the non-violent action in favour of the most disadvantaged people in India".

"IF YOU ARE NOT INDIFFERENT, THE WORLD WILL BE DIFFERENT" (P.V. RAJAGOPAL)

A petition has been launched yesterday by Avaaz. This is a great opportunity for Jan Satyagraha to get more visibility and to put more pressure on the government to address the demands of marginalized communities of India seriously. Sign the petition online, and spread the message! www.avaaz.org/Jan_Satyagraha_2012



JAN SATYAGRAHA AROUND THE WORLD

For several months friends and partner NGOs of Ekta Parishad held many support actions to claim their solidarity with the Indian marchers and to highlight the issue of landlessness. In September 15th, the Meal brought together thousands of people from 33 cities in the world to share a meal to support the march in India and local farmers. On September 21st, over 200 people took the departure of the march Le Croisic - Paris (France), which will end on the Trocadero square on October 17th. Many other events took place in France, UK, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, etc.

In October, international support is intense with many actions in various countries. Some of the different actions are listed below. To encourage these actions and to raise the voice of the marchers in India, Nicholas Barla, an activist of Ekta Parishad from Orissa, will arrive in Europe on the 5th and participate in marches, conferences, meetings, etc. For more information about the solidarity actions and the coming of Nicholas Barla, please contact Marie Bohner : marie@organisehumanevents.org



The Meal in Geneva, September 15th, 2012

List of solidarity actions around the world

March Le Croisic - Paris	21 September to 17 October	Le Croisic to Paris (France)	Solidarity March organised by La Paix en Marche, Gandhi International and others.	Gilles Changeon : lapaixenmarche@live.fr
Exhibition : Walking, a dialogue between art and social movement	27 September to 10 October	Habitat Center, New-Delhi (India)	Exhibition of contemporary art coordinated by Fran Wilde UK and presenting the works of Simon Williams UK (photographs), Vikram Nayak IN (installation/video) and Nesa Gschwend CH (installation/video)	www.ektaparishad.com/ / www.nesagschwend.ch/ / www.vikramnayak.in/ / www.simonwilliamsphotography.com
Solidarity Marches around UK	September / October	UK	Various solidarity marches around UK organised during the year 2012 by Christian Aid UK and Action Village India.	Ivan : ivan@actionvillageindia.org.uk
Marches for Justice	6 October	Norwich and Bury St Edmunds (UK)	Marches for justice organized by Christian Aid in support to Ekta Parishad.	Mark Lewin : uksox@yahoo.co.uk
Support week-end around Jan Satyagraha	6 - 7 October	Offenburg (Germany)	Various activities organised around Jan Satyagraha and non-violence : a conference, a nice evening, a march from Laach to Offenburg and a march from Offenburg to Strasbourg.	Stefan Walther : docteur@drwalther.eu
Week-end of solidarity around Jan Satyagraha and land-grabbing	6 - 7 October	Strasbourg (France)	A week-end of solidarity with various activities around Jan Satyagraha and global land-grabbing (information stand, films, march from Offenburg to Strasbourg).	Alain Fabre : yvesalain.fabre@gmail.com
Arrival of the March Le Croisic - Paris	17 October	Trocadero Square, Paris (France)	Arrival of the march and gathering of people for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and in solidarity with Ekta Parishad.	Gilles Changeon : lapaixenmarche@live.fr
Development week	November	Montpellier (France)	Presentation and discussion on Jan Satyagraha during the Development week in Montpellier.	Christian : c.bouryesnault@free.fr
Evenings on India	2011 - 2012	Switzerland	A "package" for evenings around India/Gandhi/Ekta Parishad and Jan Satyagraha is proposed and usable in various cities.	Küde Meier : k.meier@gmx.ch

This list is not exhaustive. Check the map of solidarity actions for updated information : www.ektaeurope.org/solidarity-actions

FOLLOW JAN SATYAGRAHA !

Follow the action daily through articles, press releases, pictures and videos on :

www.ektaparishad.com, www.jansatyagraha.org, www.ektaeurope.org

And on the Facebook page : [Jan Satyagraha 2012](https://www.facebook.com/JanSatyagraha2012)

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