

EKTA PARISHAD

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# Jan Satyagraha News

FEBRUARY 2010

## France: « Foot march for dignity and against poverty »

On the past 28<sup>th</sup> of January, a meeting has been held at Grenoble, France, gathering several local associations (CS Chorier Berriat, Union régionale des CS de Rhône Alpes, ATD Quart Monde, Entr'actifs, Cause Commune-SC, etc) and where also Biju, representative of Ekta Parishad was present, in order to prepare the organization of a country foot march against poverty which will precede a regional march planned on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of July arriving at Lyon, France, during the « Dialogues in Humanity ». Other county foot marches are planned in the Drôme, in Ardèche, in Savoie and in the Rhône (French counties).

During those foot marches, local festi-

vals and meetings will take place between the population, the walkers, the artists and the intellectuals.

The objectives of those events are the followings:

- Awareness: collective awareness, dignity for the people in poverty situation. Change of the perception of poverty. Progress in the analysis of the causes of those situations.
- « Social » objectives: Links between the participants. To develop the feeling of belonging to a collective.
- Political objectives: meeting with the President of the General Council of Isere and implementation of real and evaluable actions regarding the poverty situations.

For further information, please contact Mr. Manu Bodinier, [manubod@yahoo.com](mailto:manubod@yahoo.com)



The journal 2009 of the French association Femmes Internationales Murs Brisés (FIMB) is accessible on the following link:  
<http://fimb-asso.org/fr/pages/traut union/traut union.html>

FIMB is an international platform of solidarity which proposes actions at the benefit of the children and the most deprived through 3 areas: education, humanitarian issues and environment.



Loïc, Tanguy and Thomas, 3 French men who left by bicycle Orléans (France) in March 2009 towards India, have just finished their in-solidarity journey (cf. newsletter of January 2009). During their stay, they visited different projects of Ekta Parishad in various States of India.

Follow their adventures clicking on this link:

<http://www.dynamosolidaire.fr/>

# International Conference “Towards a Non-violent Economy”

*From the 30<sup>th</sup> of January to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, an International Conference “towards a non-violent economy” has taken place in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, organized by Gandhi International and Ekta Parishad.*

*Here are the commentaries collected during the event, from some of the participants. We acknowledge the Indian and international delegates to have honored us by their participation and their precious contribution which has permitted high qualities exchanges.*



## Louis Campana

President of Gandhi International  
France

“The idea to organize an International Conference towards a non-violent economy came to me after my participation at the World Social Forum of Bombay in 2004 and the one of Belém in 2009. I realized that the world was under economic pressure but that we always remain within the same system. However, the violence of the system demands an alternative that is why I wondered: Can we go towards a non-violent economy?”

Today, someone told me that 500.000 NGOs are working on that issue but I observe that the NGOs are more concerned by their own difficulties and that they do not bring solutions because they are themselves part of this system. As long as the power will be concentrated in the top of the pyramids, nothing will change. The vision of Gandhi, revived by Rajagopal, is that power has to be re-

appropriated by grassroots people, where they are, locally. Unfortunately, the power of the base is more and more weakened because it has less and less resources to develop its economy. The water, the land, the forest, the appetite to do and to undertake are stolen from them. The problem is not isolated. On the contrary, it is the same everywhere. The industrial lobbies understood that to take the control of the resources is a way to control people. If civilization consists in controlling people, then humanity is damned. However, it has developed toward happiness, so we realized that the essential resource is the human being themselves. When we talk about going towards a non-violent economy, the first step for every one is to reappropriate its own interior strength, to find their own equilibrium. Violence occurs when this equilibrium is broken.

The contents of the Conference are a pretext to make people meet each other. The important thing is that representatives of multinationals, of the civil society, of social movements and politics could share on the topic of the Swaraj, the Swadeshi and the Trusteeship --the elements on which the reflection of Gandhi are based.”



## Jeanne Brisson

Logistic coordinator, Gandhi  
International  
India

“All the Bhopal team, Ekta Parishad, Gandhi International and myself as coordinator of this event, are really happy to have had the opportunity to welcome the delegates of the International Conference “Towards a non-violent economy”, which was held from January 30th to February 3rd in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

Forty-five Indian delegates and 40 international ones were present. A good number of them were visiting India for the first time, discovering the country and its traditions. We made the choice to organize this meeting in an Indian context regarding the form and the content, highlighting Gandhian thinking. We talked about the three core concepts of Swaraj, Swadeshi and Trusteeship. With regard to the format also, we learnt that a conference can begin not only with great welcoming addresses (Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, French Consulate, Subha Rao Ji) but also with songs, dances and prayers.

During a very intense three-day plenary session, what was highlighted was the crucial point of in listening to the most deprived ones instead of thinking ‘for them’. About four hundred adivasi from the neighboring areas of Bhopal joined the delegates for a public rally. Throughout this event, the urgent need for a new kind of economy, under the rule of ethics, serving humankind without any exclusion, was brought into the public debate. Headed by the musicians and dancers, we walked from Gandhi Bhavan to the New Market of Bhopal and came back, in a brilliant mix of colors: red or yellow saris, green and white Ekta Parishad flags but also foreign delegates proud of their traditional tikka on the forehead.

This Conference offered a wonderful possibility of networking and of cross-fertilizing ideas between countries and organizations. Nineteen countries from four continents were represented and simultaneous translations were made in four different languages.

On February 3rd, the whole morning was dedicated to the upcoming actions that could be taken, to help concretizing these non-violent economy possibilities we had just discussed. A 2012 motion was unanimously ac-

cepted, aiming at giving full support to Jansatyagraha 2012, but also at an internationalization of the action. Simultaneous non-violent actions will be held in different countries, claiming the same demands on land, water and natural resources, which all should belong in common to all people. On 4th, 5th and 6th February, since 2010 is a “training year” (capacity building for the future young leaders of Jansatyagraha 2012) for Ekta Parishad, the delegates had the opportunity to attend one of these training programs: a youth camp held in Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh. They dialogued with the “learners” about the different non-violent methods of struggle, and got to know the very concrete issues that the Indian villages are daily facing. I was very touched to be a witness of this whole process.

Among all, I will remember this superb vision during the opening ceremony panel: Light Aganwa from Sudan, Aye-Aye Win from Myanmar, Sebastian Perez Vasquez from Mexico, wearing the very colorful traditional hat of Chiapas, and Subba Rao Ji, who symbolizes our very special link with Gandhi Ji and India. They were beautiful, and this time was full of hope for our common future.”



### Ali Serhrouchni

Director of the High Studies in Management Institute of Rabat  
Morocco

"I came to this Conference to represent the *Dialogues en Humanité* (Dialogues on Humanity) born from the encounter between Patrick Viveret, philosopher, and Gérard Collomb, senator and mayor of Lyon, France, during the world summit on sustainable development of Johannesburg 2002. We wanted to create a forum on the human being and this takes place every year in Lyon at the Tête d'Or park since 2001.

I also came to learn and to understand. I am part of a liberal family who are well off. I am also philosopher by formation and my sensibility is oriented towards the comprehension of the the human being. Moreover, I am Muslim and my religious values taught me to be present for the others.

India is well known to be a spiritual center. Coming here, I feel like I am on pilgrimage. During this conference, I understood a lot of things. With so many meetings and cultural diversity, we can only learn because it is in the multiculturalism that we are able to learn.

I learnt that the "to have" is more important than the "to be" and I am changing that in my mind. Maybe it is easier for me to evolve towards these kind of thoughts because I had the chance to get the "to have"? I have participated in numerous scientific conferences but coming to Bhopal, I was looking for other things and I could learn a lot."

I am very interested in the foot march of 100.000 persons that Ekta Parishad is organizing for 2012. Now, we have to think about the way we could maximize our efforts to diffuse this event so that it becomes as widespread as possible. What we saw and heard during the last few days can be used for our reflection."



### Karima Delli

Member of the European Parliament – The Green Party  
Member of the Indian Delegation  
France

"My participation at this conference, which is also my first visit in India, permitted me to meet, to share and to see that several initiatives already exist, particularly in France but also in other countries, which support the landless peoples' movement. It was a great space to exchange ideas where there is a real listening. Every one brings their own experience and expertise.

Also, I am here to remember that I will be present in 2012 for Jansatyagraha because yes, nowadays, we are in a system which destroys human beings and which only looks for a short-term profits, at the expense of populations, forced to emigrate, and losing their lands. We are here to claim that those populations have rights and that we will be with them to make life together more respected."



### Lilian Esther Alfonso

Servicio de Paz y Justicia  
Paraguay

"The SERPAJ in Paraguay, is in solidarity with the farmers. The actions implemented by Ekta Parishad are a very interesting way to struggle for the landless people. It represents an example to follow for us. It was incredible to have the opportunity to share with so many people coming from so many different countries, exchanging their experiences. The philosophy of non-violence has to be diffused in Paraguay and it is what I will do coming back in my country."



### Jagat Basnet

Director of the CSRC (Community Self-Reliance Center)  
Nepal

"A non violent economy is a very important concept for Nepal. Land rights, nonviolent actions and social economy are very connected. We need to build a movement including the gandhian philosophy in Nepal. Economic violence is growing in my country. Many farmers are suffering. They are facing the same difficulties as the Indian farmers.

We are much closed with Ekta Parishad since 2004 and we will support Jansatyagraha 2012 from Nepal. We have a strong solidarity with the Indian movements. We also already have some activities to support JS 2012 that we will submit to the Indian Embassy. We are learning a lot since this partnership."



### Yves Berthelot

President of the French Committee for International Solidarity (CFSI) and of the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)  
France

"I accepted the invitation of Rajagopal to participate in this conference because I know very well the movement of Ekta Parishad. The two organizations of which I am president and vice president are very interested in working with such a movement. The mission of the CFSI is to support family agriculture as a tool against the malnutrition. We are directly concerned by the access to the land and we can think about possibilities of cooperation.

Lots of people are displaced from their lands and mistreated by the police or the industries which occupy their lands. And, it is here that the OMCT can intervene supporting those populations in their struggle to obtain fair indemnities and rehabilitations. Moreover, in this kind of event, it is easier to develop new contacts that can evolve into new collaborations.

Regarding the topic, «towards a non-violent economy », I think that it is a non-realistic utopia. However, observing people coming from so different contexts and, listening the presentations of real actions on the field, I am convinced that it is possible to reduce the violence of the economy, by continuing to associate our efforts and experiences."



**Camille Joseph Gomis**

President of Non-violent generation in Senegal and France, talking about Ekta Parishad:

“I believe in this kind of conference. The foot marches bring benefits for the rights of the poor people. I am sure that the results of Jansatyagraha 2012 will be very good because a march to claim peoples’ rights and justice is a way to respect the life. A one-year march is difficult but no more than taking up weapons. In Janadesh 2007, the farmers got some positive results but I think that in 2012, they will get more and more. It will be a very decisive step for the poor people but it does not mean that it will be the end.

In Senegal, we are facing many social problems. We can learn from this nonviolent way to struggle that Ekta Parishad is using. We can learn from their experiences. Being together in this struggle is very important.

Now, I feel like an Indian. My heart is in India and I hope that the heart of India will be also in Senegal.”



**Peter Bay**

Mundri Relief and Development Association Southern Sudan

“I accepted the invitation to participate in the conference because of the topic. I wanted to learn more about nonviolence. During the meeting, I learnt so many things and I met lots of people. It will help me to develop my activities and my work. It was a very good event. We shared our experiences and that has changed my thoughts on the way that I want to help my country.

I am a teacher trainer for Primary School, it means I teach to teachers and I want to incorporate the nonviolent way of thinking into my trainings. I want to take advantage of my position to diffuse the idea of nonviolence.

In the rural communities where I work, everything is violence. Some of the children were soldiers and have grown in a very violent climate. They need now to switch to nonviolence. We have to teach them that they can solve their problems without violence. I think I learnt quite enough here to be able to diffuse non-violent actions in my region.”



**Babu Lal Sharma**

Coordinator of the Gandhi Global Forum India

“This is the first conference I have participated in where there have been actions before global discussions. In all the other ones, we talk and after we try to implement common actions. At any time I was feeling that I was in an academic seminar. We were sharing with activists, with people who know very well the reality. There was enthusiasm. Every one was feeling that yes, he can contribute something toward nonviolent acts against the oppression. The conference has been able to identify what were the common problems and who were the victims. Everybody was thinking how to mobilise themselves and how to raise awareness to find a solution in their own atmosphere in a non violent way. The conference has been able to give the message that violence is not the way to find solutions. Violence has no option.”



**Jacky Blanc**

Chief Executive Operator of La NEF, Cooperative Society for Finance in Solidarity France.

“I receive lots of invitations and often I have to refuse. First, I accepted to participate in this conference because the list of the invited people was very interesting and also because the persons who solicited my presence did it with a friendly and with a sincere insistence. I did not know India but I heard a lot about it, so it was also a way to discover this country by myself. Moreover, the non-violent economy concept is very important and especially in our area. This can appear as a new concept but really it is what we have been doing for 30 years at the NEF. I wanted to share our experiences with others.

The central point I learned during this event, is the issue of how land is linked to the rural depopulation which is a preoccupation present on all the continents. My father, who was himself farmer, used to say that the land should belong to those who are cultivating it. However, nowadays, the land belongs to those who have the capital.

Walking with the tribal communities who claim their right to cultivate the lands they are living on, has been for me a very powerful experience. If I had to keep only one thing to bring back with me in France, I will keep the multiple colors of the saris of the women who were walking near to me, in their poverty and dignity.”



**Rita Roy**

South Asia Peace Alliance India

“This international conference was a good opportunity to exchange views and ideas. It was interesting to see the approach of the different people about nonviolence. As an Indian person, it is more something that comes spontaneously, from the heart. So, the exchanges were really interesting. We also have similarities in our thinking and views regarding the whole concept of non violence. Every one agreed that the current model is violent.

During this event, we were all together expressing our solidarity and fraternity between each other. We all belong to the same family. We are working for peace and justice. We were all coming from different countries but we all want to be part of this world. They all joined enthusiastically the dances and songs of our tribal communities. This conference was an example of solidarity which proved that we belong to the same family.”



**Emmanuel Marchant**  
 Representative of Danone  
 Communities  
 France

“I met Louis Campana, president of Gandhi International, at the World Social Forum of Belem in 2009. During this event, he presented to me his project of an International Conference articulated around the idea of a nonviolent economy. I told myself that this space could be a real possibility to dialogue and to listen. My objective is to listen and to understand.

In Danone Communities, we try to invent a nonviolent economy issued from the encounter between Danone and its know-how--with others actors of the civil society. For that, we need to create a dialogue as

large as possible because we cannot obtain answers without this dialogue which facilitates such actions, elaborated and set up together.

Danone Communities was born from the meeting between a business man and Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2006. We thought about our governance and we wanted to create a space where it is possible to work together. The projects we support do not belong to Danone but to the social entrepreneurs, NGOs and to those who have the will to act for social change. We work in co-creation. This means that we never put ourselves in opposition with what have already been created in the developing world.

We are convinced that it is imperative to give dignity back to people who are living

in the rural areas. At the crossroads of our huge worldwide challenges, we are constantly wondering: Which technologies do we have to bring forward nowadays? Are we able to create enterprises at a village or regional scale which are sustainable? That is what we are already doing. Moreover, we ask ourselves, how as Danone Communities we could have an impact on the land access for the farmers? I am not coming back from this conference with a method. However, I expected meetings and I am not disappointed, on the contrary. We all experienced real human moments where we could share and exchange freely. This conference constituted a model in which may be new thing could grow to make able other possible futures.”

Elodie Kergesse

## You are in **India**, and:

⇒ You want to join a **non-violent foot march** to support landless people?

⇒ You want to participate in a **youth camp** to learn more about the leadership trainings?

### Foot marches (Padyatra)

Date	Place	Contact
<b>4-15 March</b>	KGNS Office, Ramnatkara, near Calicut, <b>Kerala</b>	epkerala@gmail.com benzijohnson@yahoo.co.in
<b>11-15 March</b>	Jamui, <b>Bihar</b>	pragatigvs@gmail.com
<b>8 March</b>	Gumla, <b>Jharkhand</b>	nayasawera_vikaskendra@rediffmail.com
<b>20-25 March</b>	Ranchi, <b>Jharkhand</b> (Seminar and foot march)	nayasawera_vikaskendra@rediffmail.com

### Youth Camps

Date	Place	Contact
<b>1-3 March</b>	KGNS Office, Ramnatkara, near Calicut, <b>Kerala</b>	epkerala@gmail.com benzijohnson@yahoo.co.in
<b>15-16 March</b>	Koderma, <b>Jharkhand</b> (Women workshop)	nayasawera_vikaskendra@rediffmail.com

**Join us!**

*Prashant Kumar, 40 years old, is State coordinator of Chhattisgarh. He was born in Phillenkery, a panchayat situated in the North of Kerala, near the city of Calicut. He tells us his story.*

"I grew up in Kerala, in the South of India. In this part of the country, people are involved in political parties at a very young age. Most often, at the beginning, they joined them because they think it is funny to have flags and to participate in demonstrations. There are political parties in every school, with elections, competitions. In 1981, a 15-day foot march was initiated by Rajagopal to raise the awareness of people about the land issues. Two years later, at 14 years old, I decided to be more involved in the political parties and I stopped studying. My parents were very disappointed by my choice. At that time, I joined the movement of Rajagopal which was not known as Ekta Parishad yet, without knowing what it was exactly. First I thought it was an business (laughing).

I joined a youth camp in Tilda, Chhattisgarh. I learnt a lot of things there like the language because I did not understand anything at the meeting which was in Hindi. I also had to become accustomed to wake up early, and to share the daily life with other persons than my family. We were many young people, all eating and sleeping together, coming from different communities and regions.

After this youth camp, I went to a village of Chhattisgarh where I stayed 3 months. There, I could learn the Chhattisgarhi language and the different issues the villagers were facing and I decided that, all right, now I know this movement is really about and I decided that I wanted to work with it. Rajagopal agreed but

told me that first I had to study. So, I followed a 6-month formation on carpentry, then another one on organic farming.

Later I began working as a village organizer. After a demonstration in Chhattisgarh, I was arrested by the Police and put in jail with many other activists. The conditions were very hard. We were 30 persons in only one room with very bad hygienic conditions and food. We could hear outside the prison many people supporting us so after 11 days, we were all released. When we got out, we saw 2000 persons waiting for us! I was so impressed. After that event, the Government was put under pressure, and gave land to 84 families and 6 officers were suspended. I thought at this moment that I had a good job.

After a conference in Tilda, I met Vinod Kumar, the current leader of the Ekta Foundation Trust who was at that time in charge of an organization working on land issues. I joined him in Madhya Pradesh to work in a village of Ambara in the district of Khandwa. There, once again I was put in jail by the Police who were accusing me of Naxalism. I could send a message to Vinod who explained them that I was a social activist and after two days of negotiation I came back to the village. At that time, the movement was not well-known, and suffering from a misunderstanding of the authorities, and so, was associated with the naxalite movement.

During my stay in Madhya Pradesh, we organized many padyatras and youth

camps. We also created offices in different blocks. At the same time, we were diffusing information about our activities and what we were struggling for to the Police stations in order to make them aware that we were all social activists working in a nonviolent way and not terrorists.

After carrying out the first big and important foot march in 1999 (starting from the Chambal region (MP) to Raigarh Chhattisgarh), I was given the responsibility of regional coordinator in Madhya Pradesh in Vidisha. I was in charge of the people's mobilization in order to struggle against the appropriation of the land by industries and to collect the applications to obtain pattas (title deed).

After that, it was time to prepare the second massive foot march: Janadesh 2007. Then, for the third time in my life, I was arrested and put in jail with 11 other people. Policemen went to my home in Kerala in order to investigate and obviously they did not find anything. After 15 days of detention, the Police publicly apologized in a press meeting admitting officially Ekta Parishad as a nonviolent movement struggling for landless people. From this moment, EP became very popular in the villages. After Janadesh, I moved back to Chhattisgarh because my wife, with whom I get married in 2000, and my son were living there. Since 2009, I have been the state coordinator of Chhattisgarh."

Elodie Kergresse



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« Well being of the last for the well being of all »