

EKTA PARISHAD

In this
Issue...

SPECIAL ISSUE!

From Janadesh 2007 to
Jansatyagraha 2012

INDIA

5.000 Satyagrahis
marched to the Parliament
of India

SAPA: Core group
meeting and workshop
EP: Youth camp and
padyatra

INTERNATIONAL

Ekta Parishad will be
present at the COP15
Conference

Planning of Rajagopal

AND ALSO

Portrait: Bhagavat Brasad
Patel, activist

New links of interviews,
blogs and documents!



Jan Satyagraha News

NOVEMBER 2009



Invitation of Rajagopal, President of Ekta Parishad ...

Janadesh 2007 was a big challenge for all of us. Many people had raised serious doubts whether 25 000 people can walk for a month. Is it possible for so many people survive for such a long time foot march with one meal a day? Will the Government ultimately listen to the voice of the poor people? Or will they be chased by the law and order?

Having experienced Janadesh and also the power of the poor and marginalized people, many of these doubts are cleared away. I am sure a larger number of people will support Jansatyagraha 2012.

Jansatyagraha 2012 will demand four times more support in terms of letter writing, in terms of footprints and also in terms of financial contribution and manpower. We need your support. So please begin to act today.

The time will pass very fast. We also need your support to get more people and organisations involved at every level... for mobilization, for advocacy, for fund raising and communication.

A country like India where problems are too many will demand larger mobilization to bring about basic change. We are trying to address change at the social and economic level. We are also interested in strengthening a process of participatory democracy and responsible governance. Though the action is in India, we want the world at large to join this process.

We believe in Jai Jagat and Sarvodaya - *Jai Jagat means Victory of the world, Sarvodaya means Well-being of all through the well-being of the last.*

Thank you very much.

Rajagopal P.V.
President
Ekta Parishad

From Janadesh 2007 to Jansatyagraha 2012

From Janadesh 2007...



On October 2nd, 2007, twenty-five thousand people representing communities from all over India gathered in Gwalior to begin what proved to be the largest non-violent movement

for land reform in the country's history. Its commencement marked the United Nations' International Day of Non-Violence and the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. To witness communities united in a display of non-violent civil disobedience evoked memories of the satyagrahas of Mahatma Gandhi that inspired civil rights movements throughout the world. Support came from all over, with 250 satyagrahis from international organizations showing their solidarity with each step that they took. More than 100 members of parliament supported Janadesh, including the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh who announced the establishment of a Land Commission and his plan to redistribute land to the landless communities in the region. The constant media coverage brought the voice of the satyagrahis to people all over the country and social activists pledged their solidarity with the satyagrahis of Janadesh.



On October 29th, 2007 the Government of India announced that it was ready to establish a National Land Reforms Committee and a National Land Reforms Council with 50% of the

new committee and council's members coming from social and civil society organizations involved in the land rights movement. The success of this historical display of non-violent action gives us all a reason to celebrate, but we must remember that the struggle is not over. The promises made on October 29th must be followed through and we all must be prepared to continue in this struggle for justice for the people.

Achievements of Janadesh 2007...

Since the Government of India agreed with the demands of landless at the end of Janadesh 2007, a few steps have been taken and **some policy changes have emerged.**

- *Land Acquisition Act 2007 (Amendment)*

In 2007, the Minister of Rural Development suggested several amendments for the Act 1894 that addresses the interests of destitute communities. The new act first starts by defining the expression "cost of acquisition" in order to ensure that the organizations working for peoples' land rights could have a legal grounding to better argue for rights and benefits of the project affected people. The amended Act calls for a social impact assessment to be carried out in each project affected areas. Each state will have a Land Acquisition Compensation disputes Settlement Authority that will have the same power of a civil court at some extent, making all the efforts to solve the dispute within 6 months. One same authority should be implemented at the central level.

- *The Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill 2007*

Land acquisition for public development often means the loss of everything: land, livelihood, shelter, with social, cultural, economic and emotional impacts for displaced people. All these aspects must be addressed in the case of resettlement. The Bill proposes the introduction of Social Impact Assessment of projects which shall take into consideration the impact on public and community properties, assets and infrastructures (roads, water, grazing land, etc.). An Administrator is in charge of minimizing displacement of persons, consulting with affected persons, ensuring the protection of the interests of the adversely affected persons of the Scheduled Tribes, arranging land for rehabilitation and resettlement, and other tasks in order to ensure a fair rehabilitation.

- *The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act, 2006 (Recognition of Forest Rights)*

The implementation of this new Act in January 2007 recognizes and gives forest rights, as well as rights to occupy forest land, to scheduled tribes and traditional forest dwellers. The Act states that forest dwellers will only be relocated if there is no other alternative. Resettlement packages should ensure that a "secure livelihood" for the affected people is provided.

- *New vision of Land Reform Agenda*

On October 16th, 2008, the first draft of a new Land Reform Policy has been submitted by the National Land reform Commission to the Ministry of Rural Development.

To Jansatyagraha 2012...

Why hold a larger non violent action?

A large number of people are living in a hopeless situation across the Indian sub-continent. Along with land-related issues, farmers' suicides increase. By primarily privileging industries, successive governments have failed to provide people with the basic means of survival. Our leaders often speak about poverty eradication but do not act. Equality exists more in policies and laws than in practice. Either people accept this with resignation and continue to be suppressed, or they challenge the government's systems. By undertaking a solidarity action in Delhi from several parts of India, they are taking up the challenge of raising their voices in front of the Government. This action will also aim to unify large groups of people suffering similar problems all over the world.

What are the demands?

- That the promises made by the Government during Janadesh 2007 be truly implemented.
- That a land reform agenda be included in the manifesto of all political parties.
- That a land distribution system be devised to provide land rights for people.
- That land and land titles be given to tillers and poor people so they cannot be evicted.
- That displacement of tribals in the name of so-called "development projects" - for example, national parks, sanctuaries, big dams, mining industries, SEZ, power plants, etc. - be minimized and humanized immediately.
- That those who have already been displaced be given a fair and immediate compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement.
- That there be just distribution of livelihood and natural resources to all poor people.

*With a
simple click!*

Interview of Rajagopal, president of Ekta Parishad during the Janadesh march in 2007 in Mathura

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnE2nfpIW7I&feature=related>

How will the action take place?

During 3 years, many huge non-violent actions will take place.

- 1 In 2009-10, twenty **Community Melas** (meaning Cultural Activities) will be held in different parts of India. These are basically for identifying and highlighting the issues in particular tribal communities which will give strong support for Jansatyagraha 2012.
- 2 In 2010-11, organizing **youth camps** in different parts of India to help them solve the issues of poor and marginalized people..
- 3 On the 2nd of October 2011, Rajagopal accompanied by 50 activists will began a one-year foot march departing from Orissa. They will pass through 9 different states before joining Delhi on the 2nd of October 2012. In every state, 50 to 100 people will follow the march until reach the border of the next state and hand over. The objective of this important initiative is to mobilize and motivate 100.000 people to **assemble** in different villages outside Delhi. On the 2nd of October 2012, when the padyatra team will walk into Delhi, people from these villages will also start walking to reach the Parliament..

A special Committee has been formed to organize the logistic of this large event.

5,000 SATYAGRAHIS MARCHED TO THE PARLIAMENT OF INDIA

- 4 DAYS OF SATYAGRAHA FOR NATIONAL LAND REFORMS POLICY
- 5,000 PEOPLE FROM DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES GATHERED AT JANTAR MANTAR, NEW DELHI
- 5,000 SATYGRAHIS SLEPT ON THE ROAD AND CONTINUED FASTING DEMANDING DECLARATION OF NATIONAL LAND REFORM POLICY AND FOREST RIGHT RECOGNITION ACT

*The issue of peoples' control and ownership of land is at the centre of livelihood rights and self-esteem that governments have been wilfully neglecting for a long time. In order to bring land issues back into the mainstream social and political agenda, the **Janadesh 2007** long march had been undertaken by Ekta Parishad from 02nd to 29th October 2007. As a result of this effort, the Government of India formed the **National Land Reforms Committee** headed by the Minister of Rural Development and the **National Land Reforms Council** chaired by the Prime Minister. The Committee's report providing policy guidelines has been submitted to the Commission and the need now is for the Council to formulate and declare the New Land Reforms Policy. This Satyagraha has been organized in order to pressure the Council to start the prescribed tasks. The President of Ekta Parishad and also member of the **National Land Reforms Council**, Mr. Rajgopal P.V said that this policy is closely linked to the issues of poverty and hunger and that the government needs to act on it forthwith.*

Over 5,000 people representing landless labourers, small farmers mainly from dalit and adivasi communities of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala gathered at Jantar Mantar. These people continued to sleep under open skies, fasting through the daytime and eating one meal a day in the evening, until the government

and the National Land Reforms Council give a direct assurance of when and what it plans to do regarding the New Land Reforms Policy in the immediate future.



Jantar Mantar, 30th of October, 2009

Ramesh Sharma of Ekta Parishad said that the Minister of Rural Development called a meeting on the last 13th of October and the overall Government's attitude did not reflect the urgency and importance that have to be accorded to the declaration and implementation of this policy.

Shri Govind Acharya, prominent proponent of the Swadeshi movement and Convenor of **Rashtriya Swabhiman Andolan** addressed over 5,000 **satyagrahis** on the first day. Speaking alternately in Bhojpuri and Chhattisghari language, he said the true indicator of realistic development of rural areas is the freedom from hunger and fear. But today the lives and livelihood of millions of rural people in the country is far from secure and therefore non-violent actions like this Satyagraha is all the more relevant.

Shri Ran Singh Parmar, National Convenor of Ekta Parishad, said that the Government continues to claim that there is no available land to be distributed to the poor, yet hundreds and thousands of acres are being handed over for private and state enterprises, mining and tourism industries, etc. This double standard has to stop.

Shri Pradeep Priyadarshi, EP land rights activist from Bihar, informed that the Government of Bihar, has now declared that for various political reasons

it has no intention to implement the Bandhapadhyay Commission report. In 2008, the Government of Bihar had set up a State Land Reforms Commission headed by D. Bandhapadhyay and received its report which is said to be well balanced and provided land reforms guidelines that would help in the eradication of poverty and hunger. With non-violent peoples' action, pressure from EP and other organisations over the past year, the Bihar Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar finally took up the report for review at the cabinet after almost a year. However, the Government stand is unfortunate.

— — — — —
 | "The Committee has to |
 | call for a meeting with |
 | the Council to discuss |
 | about the implementa- |
 | tion of the new policy". |
 | Rajagopal PV |
 — — — — —

Shri Shanawaz Khan, National General Secretary of the National Student Union India, met the President and other senior activists of Ekta Parishad at the Satyagraha. Pledging support to the peoples' issues raised by the organisation, he assured that he would inform and appraise the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi and the General Secretary Rahul Gandhi on these issues.

On the second day, 30th October, a delegation led by the Ekta Parishad National Convenor, Ransingh Parmar, met Digvijay Singh, General Secretary of All India Congress Committee and former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh. He apprised the Prime Minister Office (PMO) of the Satyagrahi's demands and said that either the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh or the State Secretary Prithviraj Chauhan would meet the delegation on the following day.

On the 31st of October, the Satyagraha went into the **third day** with rousing songs and slogans exhibiting great enthusiasm in readiness to bear more hardships in their long struggle for their rights of access and control over land, water and forests.

The organisation held a National Public Hearing through the day with community leaders giving their testimony on their life situation and problems. This has been followed by a press meeting addressed by Rajagopal and EP State Conveners. During this press meeting, Rajagopal explained that "lots of land is available, for the multinationals, na-

tional parks, tourism, states... How about poor people? The social movements and the media can create pressure on the Government".



In the evening a prayer meeting has been held with 5,000 people. At

the same time, the PMO called a delegation of Satyagrahis in his office to discuss about the matter. During the discussion, the officers asked to submit

a brief report of the committee's suggestions and also to meet on the next day.

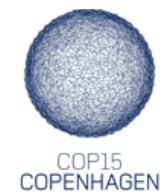
According to this, **on the evening of the first of November**, a delegation of 22 people lead by Rajagopal, met at the PMO (Ramesh Sharma, Prathivarg Chawan, Ransing Parmar, Srada Kashyap, Vinod Kumar, Aneesh, ...). After a presentation of the brief report and a discussion about the matter, the PMO promised to call a meeting of the National Land Reform Council immediately, in order to discuss the report and find a solution.

Anil G., Ajoy C., Elodie K.



To hear about the sit-in as it was experienced by Paul, a volunteer coming from Canada and visiting the programs of Ekta Parishad, click below and access to his blog:

http://onewaveintheocean.blogspot.com/2009_10_01_archive.html



Ekta Parishad will be present at the COP15 Conference

From the 7th to the 18th of December, Ramesh Sharma, international coordinator of Ekta Parishad will be in Copenhagen to participate in the United Nations Climate Change Conference whose main objective is to develop a successor to the Kyoto Protocol. Governmental representatives, NGO's, journalists ... in total 8.000 people from 170 countries will join this event. It will be an occasion for farmer's representations to make their voice heard and defend their proposal for solving the climate crisis.

In order to follow up this event, Ekta Parishad will held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, a National Conference on Climate Change on the next 28th and 29th of December, to discuss in a concrete way about the actions and orientations that can be taken by the movement in this issue.

For further information about agriculture and climate change, you could read the article of Sergio P. González, member of the task force bureau of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

<http://en.cop15.dk/blogs/view+blog?blogid=1271>

Elodie Kergresse

Where is Rajagopal?

DECEMBER 2009

1	CESCI, Madurai, Tamil Nadu	Music Festival in support to Jansatyagraha 2012
2-6	Melbourne, Australia	Parliament of the world's religions http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm?n=8
8-18	Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh	SAPA Core Group Meeting, workshop, youth camp and padyatra
20-23	Orissa	State meeting of the EP activists

SAPA: Core Group meeting and workshop EP: youth camp and padyatra

The Core group Meeting of the South Asia Peace Alliance,(SAPA) followed by a workshop on *Strengthening Democracy through Nonviolence* will take place at Gwalior and Joura (MP), from the 6th to the 18th of December. Prior to that, a preparatory meeting of the facilitators of the workshop will be held on the 5th and 6th. This Core group meeting will gather the constituent partner organizations of SAPA (among them EP) and will attempt to review the work done over the past year and discuss on what ways its work could be more meaningful in the future.

At the same time, from the 9th to the 18th, about 30 persons will participate in the workshop mentioned as above which will be held at the Mahatma Gandhi Seva Ashram of Joura, a youth camp will be organized by Ekta Parishad from the 11th to the 14th and a padyatra will take place from the 16th to the 18th at Sheopuri (MP).

<http://www.southasiapeacealliance.org/>

Elodie Kergresse

Portrait: Bhagavat Brasad Patel, activist

We are sitting on the road with the 5000 satyagrahis and Bhagavat, an Ekta Parishad activist coming from a village named Katchua in Madhya Pradesh, tells us his story:



In my region, after the Independence of India, the land has been divided between the Forest Department (Forest Land) and the Revenue Department (Government Land) meanwhile before, all the land was hold by the Government.

At this time, 200 families were living in this area from the river, the forest products and farming. They were given the right to cultivate 50% of the forest land.

In 1965, The Forest Department created a national park, so 12 families have been displaced in a boundary.

In 1972, the Forest Department ordered to use the trees to construct railway lines. Then, companies arrived also in this area to make paper from the bamboo of the forest. All that has had as a consequence, other displacements of people. Moreover, the river was getting dry, and the wild animals began to enter in the villages.

In 1996, the Forest Department, willing to protect the wild life, set up a program financed by the World Bank and implemented a natural reserve. Still more people have been displaced. Most of them went to urban areas.

We are in conflict with the Government, not with the animals. We do not want to destroy the forest and we are not responsible for its destruction. Tourism and companies are responsible for it. Nowadays, wild animals kill the domestic

ones in the villages and also attack its habitants. Last year we counted 10 to 15 attacks of tigers. What we want is simple. We want the Government not to allow the private companies to construct hotels in this area.

I have been struggling for the rights of my community since I met Rajagopal in 1987. Since then, we are mobilizing people, organizing youth camps, satyagrahas. We had some victories as getting pattas but it has not been always easy. For example at the beginning, in 1987, during a Satyagraha, we were 70 people. We were accused of terrorism, arrested and put in jail during 15 days.

Before participating in Janadesh 2007, people in the village were telling me: "Do not go to the city because people will kill you. In the city there is not good water and not good food". Now I feel that we can do something because we are thousands and thousands.

What I want now is to create more mobilization, make people self-sufficient. I want to promote Ekta Parishad and to support it. I want to promote organic farming and develop animal husbandries. Also, what I would like to say to the foreigners is to come and see what is happening. Do not simply give money without investing to social programs in the local areas.

Elodie Kergresse



Ekta parishad

International Coordination

Gandhi Bhawan

Shyamla Hills

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh 462002

Phone: 07554223821 - 07552661800

email : jansatyagraha2012@gmail.com

www.ektaparishad.com

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