

CONFERENCE IN GENEVA, THE RIGHT TO LAND ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE



On September 12-13th the International Mobilization Conference on the Right to Land and Livelihood was held in Geneva. The event was organized by the Ekta Europe network and Ekta Parishad. In a world of contrasts – growing interdependence side by side with growing inequalities between and within countries – this conference sought to explore the ways in which non-violent grassroots' mobilization is defending rights, promoting social justice and providing a viable route to sustainable development. By bringing together actors (activists of movements and NGOs, representatives of international organizations, politicians, intellectuals, students, etc.) from different parts of the world, the conference put the question of access to land and livelihood in an international context and created a global approach to it. Rajagopal P.V. made an introduction to the conference and elaborated on the objectives of the two days:

- examine scientific literature, policies and the evidence from activists on the impact of economic globalization processes, particularly in rural areas of developing and transition countries;
- support and develop peace-building initiatives and strategies for non-violent social, economic and political change;
- promote land rights and local community control over natural resources as a way to achieve food security, dignified work and sustainable development;
- identify the gender implications of unequal access to resources and promote the empowerment of women;
- raise public awareness and gain political, institutional and financial support for the Right to Land agenda with specific reference to the March Jan Satyagraha 2012, organized by Ekta Parishad.



Aye Aye Win, Founder Dignity International & Madjidio Niasse, Director ILC

There was a discussion of topics crucial to sustainable development by speakers of diverse backgrounds, for example: 1. Inequality, poverty and the land crisis, 2. Grassroots mobilization, non-violent action for rights and justice, 3. Sustainable production, work conditions and equitable distribution, 4. The role of international development agencies and NGOs. From this discussion, several ideas have been asserted or reaffirmed. These provide guidance to ongoing actions on the right to land and livelihood and the preparation of the March Jan Satyagraha 2012.

First, the conference highlighted the fact that the issue of access to land and livelihood is present all over the world: speeches of movements' activists

from other countries (MST, ROPPA, etc.) and of international organizations (ILC, FIAN, CETIM) showed that the problem of access to land by farmers is arising not only in India but in countries of all continents and in similar ways. Secondly, the question of access to land and livelihood is directly linked with larger issues like poverty and dignity. For example, we were reminded that 75% to 81% of the very poor people in the world are living in rural areas, and that most of them are depending on family farming. Thirdly, the issue of access to land and livelihood is a matter of political will. As Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, reminded, "hunger has its source in the countryside, and in the incompetence or in the absence of willing of governments to help small farmers to live from their work".



Flavio Valente, Secretary General, FIAN

These assessments lead to an obvious conclusion: it is completely logical and necessary to unite many actors to defend the right to land and livelihood. The common will of people who were present has been affirmed clearly through their declared support to the March Jan Satyagraha 2012. For example, Karima Delli, European Deputy of the European Green Party, promised to support the march by relaying Ekta Parishad's demands to the European Parliament and by participating in the march.



Karima Delli, Member of the European Parliament

Maria Salette Carollo, from MST (Landless movement in Brazil), declared to the Swiss media IPS that "this march must strengthen the social fight for food sovereignty and land reform in Brazil. We have to support all the people who fight for their land rights wherever they are, with farmers and poor people at the forefront". International organizations also showed their support with concrete propositions, like Christian Aid that has already planned numerous actions in England in 2012.

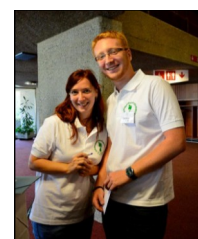


Maria Salette Carollo, MST

Thus, this conference is an important step, that will enable us to create or strengthen links between many actors that, on the local or international level, are defending rights to land and livelihood, and more generally are fighting against poverty and for dignity. It is also a great encouragement for the March Jan Satyagraha 2012! The organizers take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers, partners, speakers and participants for the contributions they made – it was a wonderful collective effort.



Margrit Hugentobler, coordinator Ekta Europe ; Marie Bonher, conference coordinator & Maël Réardard, volunteer Ekta Parishad/Ekta Europe ; Alan Leather, board member of AVI and Ekta Europe



CONFERENCE ON THE RIGHT TO LAND AND LIVELIHOOD IN GENEVA, A GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT FOR JAN SATYAGRAHA 2012

A FULL REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE WILL BE AVAILABLE SHORTLY ON THE WEBSITES OF EKTA EUROPE : (EKTAEUROPE.ORG/) AND EKTA PARISHAD (EKTAPARISHAD.COM)

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

EKTA GENEVA SUPPORT GROUP : A WONDERFUL EVENING TO RAISE SUPPORT

In the continuation of the Mobilization Conference on the Right to Land and Livelihood, the Support Group of Geneva organized a public meeting with Rajagopal. More than one hundred people came to this event on September 14th. Welcomed with a tchai (Indian tea), they attended the projection of the film "Non violent action", that shows the journey of the 25'000 marchers of the March Janadesh 2007. The participants then listened to Rajagopal, who illustrated the current situation of marginalized communities in In-

dia and spoke about the March Jan Satyagraha 2012. The lively interest of people who were present was shown by the numerous questions asked to Rajagopal. The public meeting was also an occasion to raise funds, through donations and the selling of books, films, scarves and products made by members of the Geneva Support Group (jam, soaps, etc.). The participants also showed their support to Indian marchers by leaving color footprints on a big banner.

RAJAGOPAL'S VISIT IN BELGIUM

On the occasion of his coming to Geneva, the "Mercy Home" team invited Rajagopal to come to Belgium. With considerable assistance from Etopia (the research center of the Green Party), Rajagopal was invited to give a "great environmental conference", in Brussels, on the theme of "access to land". It was a big success (more than 350 people), and after the debate several media persons wanted to interview Rajagopal. In addition to this conference, the 36 hours that Rajagopal spent in Belgium were full of activities : several meetings in Brussels, Louvain-la-Neuve, Namur and Liège allowed Rajagopal to explain Ekta Parishad's objectives and ways of action and to discuss with the representatives of many NGOs and local associations and with citizens; all were very interested by the mobilization of Ekta Parishad. All these groups agreed on an "Ekta Belgium platform", they are concerned about supporting the approach of Ekta Parishad, but also to translate in their own behaviour in Belgium the calling and the values of Ekta Parishad : how to live in non-violence here, how to support peasant agriculture here for a healthy food, how to defend rights of the poor people here, etc. It is true, due proportion being observed, that problems of access to land and other struggles of Ekta Parishad are present in many countries of the world, even in our European countries.

Rajagopal was also received in the Walloon Parliament where presidents of the commissions "agriculture" and "external relations" came out to hear his story. As for a university rector, he is considering to include the theme of non-violence in students' curriculum. Last but not least, even before Rajagopal's visit, several sections of the Green Party have decided to devote 1% of their budget to support the action of Ekta Parishad. There were so many expressions that reinforce the visibility of Ekta Belgium groups, to assume the responsibility to increase the solidarity towards marchers of Jan Satyagraha 2012!



Rajagopal with Emily Hoyos, president of the Walloon Parliament.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR LAND REFORM, GOVERNMENT IS FINALLY ACTING !

In response to the Janadesh march of 2007, the Government constituted a National Council for Land Reform, but until now, no meeting of the council took place.

Ekta Parishad is pleased to announce that the Minister of Rural Development of India confirmed that there would be a National Land Reform Council Meeting held in early October, 2011 to consider the Land Reform Policy in alleviating poverty and inequality for the poor.

Along with nine senior civil society representatives, Rajagopal met with Minister Jairam Ramesh for a two-hour interaction. The Minister conceded to the weak response of his Government on the Land Reform policy and spoke of the need for a speedy redress in favour of the poor. The Government has reviewed

the 300 recommendations received in October 2009 and has come out with a 20-point land reform agenda. This will be on the table for discussion at the National Land Reform Council, which is a 16-member body with 6 members from the civil society, and 9 Chief Ministers, and chaired by Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh.

The discussion will focus on how land is to be reallocated to the landless poor families and how proper entitlement will be ensured. The challenge of the National Land Reform Council will be to press the state governments to respond.

The Minister also agreed to come on October 1st to Kanyakumari, to the flag-off of the Samwad Yatra. Rajagopal feels "this is a very positive step of the Government of India"



EKTA PARISHAD RAISES SUPPORTS IN EUROPE DURING THE VISIT OF RAJAGOPAL

THE GOVERNMENT WILL FINALLY CALL A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR LAND REFORM

On the road with the Jan Samwad Yatra, a year-long route through India

Promoting non-violence and Rights to land & livelihood | Mobilizing for the March Jan Satyagraha 2012 | October 2011 - September 2012



WHAT IS THE JAN SAMWAD YATRA ?

The Samwad Yatra, a year-long program starting on October 2nd 2011, is a national mobilization in India leading up to the Jan Satyagraha or March for Justice in October 2012.

During the Samwad Yatra, Rajagopal and some twenty other Ekta Parishad workers will travel in a caravan of jeeps to 350 districts from the south to the north of India over the course of the next year, traveling 80,000 kilometers (October 2011 to September 2012).

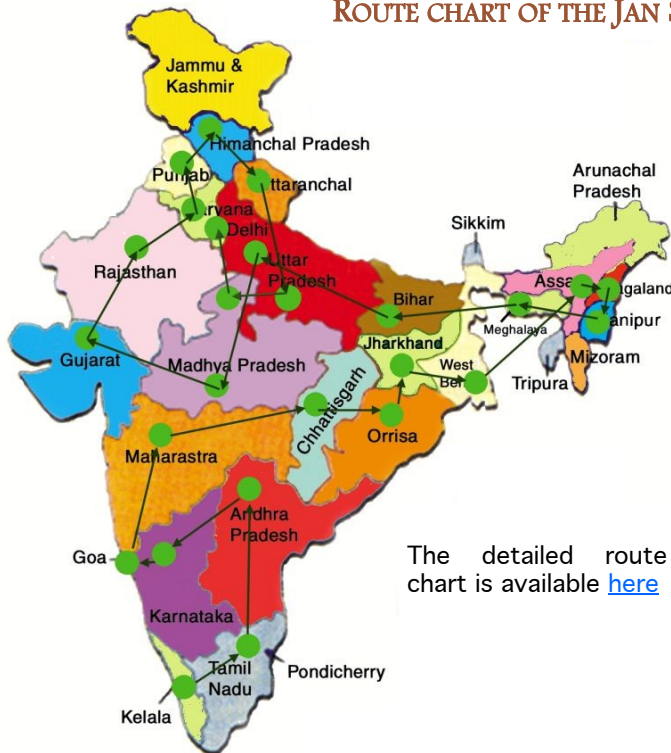
The goal of the Samwad Yatra and the Jan Satyagraha 2012 will be to increase access and ownership to land, improve livelihoods and contribute to sustainable development. It will champion the rights of the poor and strive to change land laws and policies for the benefit of agricultural labourers, peasants and small-scale farmers, and disenfranchised tribal people. Promoting rights to land, forest and water and building a non-violent economy will

strengthen people's control over vital resources, promote economic and social development locally and contribute to food security globally.

The Samwad Yatra will start at the southern tip of India, Kanyakumari, and move to all parts of the country, reaching the most northern point, in Kashmir, and will finally end in Gwalior, a few days before the beginning of the March Jan Satyagraha. During the journey, the yatra will carry the message of non-violence and land rights. This will be a chance for Ekta Parishad to interact with marginalized communities across the country, learn from the experience of people, and mobilize support for the Jan Satyagraha (March for Justice) in October 2012.

In the course of the yatra, meetings will be arranged with decision-makers in the different localities. Discussions will be initiated on a range of land issues and non-violent responses to land concentration and urban-based development.

ROUTE CHART OF THE JAN SAMWAD YATRA



The detailed route chart is available [here](#)

Kerala	October 3rd - 19th
Tamil Nadu	October 20th - 31st
Andhra Pradesh	November 1st - 17th
Karnataka/Goa	November 18th - 29th
Maharashtra	Nov.30th - Dec.28th
Chhattisgarh	Dec.29th - Jan.18th
Orissa	Jan.18th - Feb.13th
Jharkhand	Feb.14th - March 5th
West Bengal	March 6th - 11th
Assam	March 7th - 24th
Nagaland	March 25th - 26th
Manipur	March 27th - 31st
Meghalaya	April 1st - 2nd
Assam	April 3rd - 5th
Bihar	April 6th - May 7th
Uttar Pradesh	May 8th - 10th
Madhya Pradesh	May 11th - June 14th
Gujarat	June 15th - July 3rd
Rajasthan	July 4th - 18th
Haryana	July 19th - 23rd
Punjab	July 24th - 29th
Himachal Pradesh	July 30th - Aug. 7th
Uttarakhand	August 8th - 17th
Uttar Pradesh	Aug.18th - Sept. 27th
Madhya Pradesh	September 28th - 30th

Support the Jan Samwad Yatra

National and international support is a key to the success of the Jan Samwad Yatra. You can participate to it in many ways : joining the Yatra in India for few days, sharing information, participating to a letter-writing campaign, donating, initiating or joining a solidarity action... For more information, see the website of Ekta Europe ektaeurope.org or Ekta Parishad www.ektaparishad.com

By working together wherever we are and in whatever ways we can, our combined forces and goodwill will contribute to a groundswell of relevant actions. In a world that is being torn apart by long-term inequality and growing economic and environmental crises, we are all in need of the alternative vision and practical solidarity symbolized by the Jan Satyagraha.

Follow the Jan Samwad Yatra

The Jan Samwad Yatra will be the occasion of numerous meetings, events and actions. You can follow it daily through different websites :

- ✓ Ekta Parishad : www.ektaparishad.com
 - ✓ Jan Satyagraha : www.jansatyagraha.org
 - ✓ Facebook pages of Rajagopal Pv, Ekta Parishad and Jan Satyagraha
- You'll also find reports in the newsletter.

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

THE JAN SAMWAD YATRA
1 YEAR THROUGH INDIA,
COMING TO MEET PEOPLE
WHO STRUGGLE
FOR THEIR RIGHTS

On the road with the Jan Samvad Yatra, a year-long route through India

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JAN SAMWAD YATRA, DAY 1



On September 27th, a team of 50 social activists, including Dalit, Adivasis and women, left Delhi on board the Himsagar Express. Before the departure, they conducted a prayer meeting in Rajghat, the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi, and took a handful of

soil to Kanyakumari as a symbol of the land struggle in India. Kanyakumari, in Tamil Nadu, is the Southern tip of India, and the city where ashes of Gandhi were kept before immersion. It is from there, on October 2nd (International Non-violence Day), that Ekta Parishad began the yearlong tour to visit struggles for land and livelihood resources throughout the country. The day began with senior Gandhian leaders expressing their good wishes to Ekta Parishad and PV Rajagopal for the success of the Yatra. Shr. Radha Bhatt, Shri S N Subha Rao, Swami Sacchidanada, Shri Arif Mohammed Kahn and Shri Balvijay were present on the dais. Afterward, the entire group of 500 people marched 3 kilometres through Kanyakumari to Gandhi Mandapam (a memorial to Gandhi). There an interreligious prayer service was held and then the jeep yatra left for its first stop in Koodankulam in the Thirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

On the first day the yatra visited the Koodankulam Nuclear Plant Struggle. This is a struggle against displacement from land and so it is related to the Yatra's concern for the land and livelihood resources of the poor. During the visit, the local group expressed their commitment to a long-term non-violent struggle to stop the nuclear project in order to save their livelihoods and environment.



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October 2nd, 2011
the Jan Samwad
Yatra
is launched
in Kanyakumari

THE KANYAKUMARI DECLARATION

In the globalizing world the focus of every initiative is seen in its economic value. Land is being commoditized in the name of economic growth, bypassing the identity of land as a symbol of life, justice, livelihood, social status, culture and dignity of the poor and marginalized communities. This politics of systematic displacement and alienation from land is affecting the lives of people at large, especially the Dalit, Adivasis, Nomadic Tribes and Women. In this patriarchal system women's access to land rights remains as a major challenge.

Around 500 intellectuals, social workers and activists from various streams of peoples struggles such as Gandhians, Ambedkarites, and Marxists, met on the 30th of September 2011 at Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari and identified land as the common issue of survival. The group expressed its solidarity in the peoples struggle for restoration of land rights through - Jan Satyagraha 2012 (A non violent people's movement for land rights).

The group also declared that all ideologies join hand and identify land as a common issue and the urgent need to support and work together towards peoples' control over natural resources. The group is also giving a call to various groups around the globe to synchronize differences in order to synergize various social movements to address the issues related to the lives of the people at the survival level. They feel that there is an urgent need for consolidating various struggles and create a united voice for restoration of land rights and control over natural resources for the marginalized communities.

ROUTE OF THE YATRA IN OCTOBER

October 2nd, departure of the Yatra from Kanyakumari, TAMIL NADU

October 3rd to 17th, KERALA :

Trivandrum | Kollam | Allapuzha | Pathanamthitta | Kottayam | Idukki | Thrissur | Kozhikhode | Karekkad | Kannur | Wayanad | Malappuram | Palakkad | Attapadi

October 18th to 30th, TAMIL NADU :

Coimbatore/Thirupur | Dindigul/Karur | Theni | Madurai | Thirunelvali | Virudhnagar | Madurai | Sivagangai | Puthukottai | Trichy | Thanjavur/ Nagapatta | Cuddalore/Pondicherry | Villupuram

