

## On the road with the Jan Samvad 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



### THE GRAINS CHALLENGE

#### RICE AND FLOUR FOR THE MARCHERS

**Feeding 100 000 people walking during one month is a challenge! Even though there will be only one meal/day during the march, the quantity of food required for the whole event is impressive: 900 tons of rice and flour (the two main ingredients in Indian cooking) will be necessary! We already have 400 tons, and the collect is going on. As food is absolutely essential for the success of the march, we call everyone to meet this "grains challenge".**

**With 1500 INR / 22 € / 17.5 £ / 26,5 CHF / 28 CAD, you can provide 100 kg of grains to the marchers (100 kg of grains feed 400 marchers for one day!)**

**To make a donation, please visit our website:  
[www.ektaparishad.com](http://www.ektaparishad.com)**

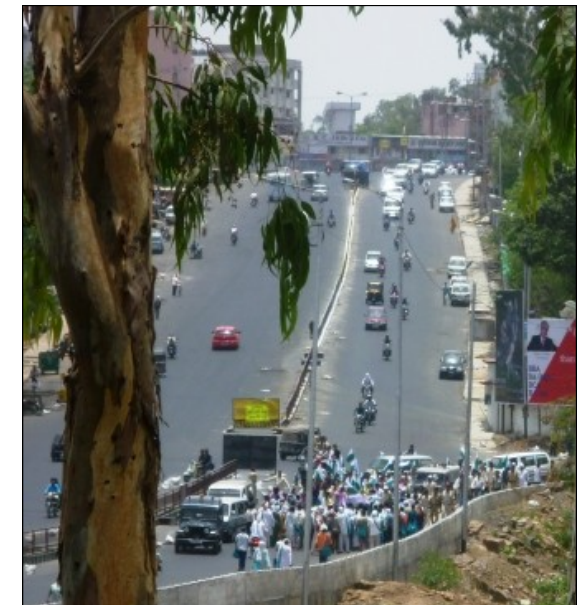
**Thank you for your support in this great challenge!  
Jai Jagat!**

### THE YATRA IN MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh (MP) is a state of central India. This state is an important working area of Ekta Parishad : historically, because Rajagopal, the leader of the movement, started his action in the Chambal Valley (North of MP) in the 70s, where he worked for the surrender of the Dacoits, groups of bandits who were spreading violence in the region. It is also a state which includes a large part of Adivasis population (about 20%), and Dalits (about 13%), who are facing various issues, especially the loss of their land and livelihood resources because of the establishment of national parks, construction of dams and infrastructures, etc.



**The youth in the movement.** From May 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>st</sup>, Ekta Parishad organized a Youth Parliament in Bhopal, in the framework of the Jan Samvad Yatra. About 175 youth came from all over India to discuss different issues related to people's rights on land and livelihood. One particular problem highlighted during these 3 days was the definition of development. In government's perspective "development" is widening of roads, mining activities, etc. This present model of development is serving few rich at the cost of poor and marginalized communities. In the view of Ekta Parishad, industrialization can be necessary for a good development, but it shouldn't be done at the cost of deprived people and by violating their rights. To change this current model of development, which is related to several issues like food security, displacements, imprisonment of people raising their voice against injustice, Rajagopal, the leader of Ekta Parishad, emphasized on the role of youth people. In order to involve them fully in the Jan Satyagraha movement and further actions, a plan has been set up at the end of the Youth Parliament. The youth who were present will work as volunteers and will encourage other youth to join the movement. Wider discussions will be initiated among the youth and students of Assam, Maharashtra and Gujarat; actions



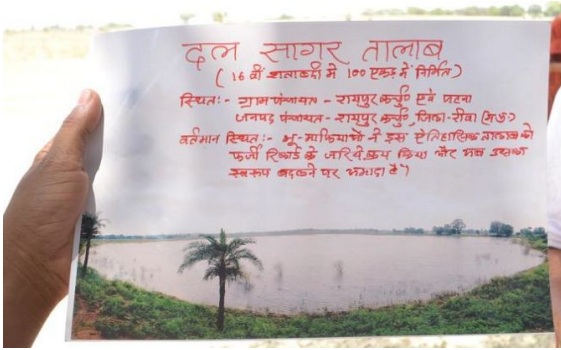
Arrival of the Jan Samvad Yatra in Bhopal city, Madhya Pradesh, May 28th, 2012

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

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A picture of a pond in Rewa district, with a text explaining that it has been acquired by the land mafia. Madhya Pradesh, May 12th, 2012

**The role of government.** Various issues in Chhatarpur show that the government is not ready to enforce judicial system in favor of landless and homeless people. One issue is about Bhoodan land: in the 50s and 60s, thousands of acres of land have been given under the land gift campaign led by Vinoba Bhave. While this land was supposed to be allocated to landless people, they still don't have the ownership of it. Another issue is the use of public money. Under government schemes, millions of rupees are supposed to be allocated to the tribal communities, but they actually receive only 10% of the money, the rest being lost into the bureaucratic system. In the meanwhile, the forest department is alienating Adivasis from their land, pushing them in a more vulnerable situation.

**Farmers are not able to live from the fruit of their work.** In Ujjain district, the issue of selling price of agricultural produces has been raised by villagers. In the wholesale market, selling rate is often below the production cost. Farmers gave the example of onions, which represent an important part of their production. At the moment, they have to sell one kilogram of onion 50 paise (1/2 rupee), while the pro-



Rally in Mandala, Madhya Pradesh, 21st April 2012

### ROUTE OF THE YATRA IN JULY

July 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>, GUJARAT : Banaskantha | Sabarkantha

July 4<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, RAJASTHAN :  
Udaipur | Chittaurgarh | Kota | Baran | Sheopor (MP) |  
Sawai Madhopur | Tonk | Jaipur | Alwar |

July 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, HARYANA :  
Rewari | Gurgaon | Jhajjar | Karnal | Kurukshetra | Ambala |

July 24<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>, PUNJAB :  
Patiala | Ludhiana | Jalandhar | Hoshiarpur | Gurdaspur |

July 30 & 31<sup>st</sup>, HIMACHAL PRADESH : Chamba | Dharamsala |

duction cost is 70 paise. Added to this, farmers don't get loans on time, which compelled them to change the crop cycle and as a result reduce their production. In these conditions, it is very difficult for farmers to make a living from their work.

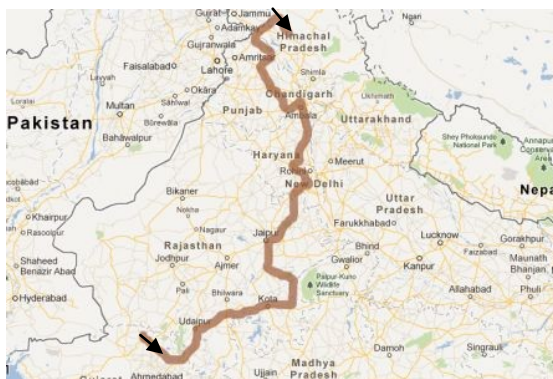
**Organic farming.** In the village of Khandlai, in Dhar district, 48 families are doing organic agriculture. Each family of the village has 2 to 2,5 acres of land. They grow cotton, corn, wheat, oilseeds and other vegetables. Organic farming is financially interesting for them as they do not have to spend money for fertilizers, and this saving is a source of stability in their life, while so many farmers are in debt because of fertilizers, GMO seeds, etc.



Children in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, June 9th, 2012

**Absurd rehabilitation plan.** In the region of Binkhera, 20 000 families have been displaced because of a dam. For their rehabilitation, the government allocated them residential land and agricultural land. The problem is that residential land and agricultural land are far from each other, one is in Alipur district, and the other in Dhar district. A sit-in has been organized in November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to protest against this absurd rehabilitation plan, but the administration is still refusing to discuss about it.

**Forest conservation as a pretext.** In the city of Jabhua, a meeting was organized to raise the issue of Bheel and Bhelala Adivasis, two tribes who were making their livelihood from the forest produces they found in the hills of Vindhyachal. After independence, the government cancelled their ownership rights on agricultural and residential land that the tribes received in 1920. To remove their ownership rights, the government used the Forest Conservation Act, but during the last 15 years, 10 000 hectares of land have been transferred for industry, mining and urbanization projects...



NEXT MONTH  
IN THE NEWSLETTER :  
FOCUS ON GUJARAT  
AND RAJASTHAN

MANY SUPPORT ACTIONS  
TO JAN SATYAGRAHA  
TAKE PLACE IN  
THE WORLD !  
SEE THE MAP  
BY CLICKING ON THE

GLOBE :





## National Council for Land Reform, first meeting after 4 years!

After 4 years, the National Council for Land Reform (NCLR) finally met for the first time on June 26<sup>th</sup> for a preparatory meeting. After Janadesh 2007, the government agreed to set up a committee in charge of suggesting recommendations to conduct a land reform, and a council (the NCLR) in charge of setting up this land reform. While the committee actually gave its recommendations, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who is the chairman of the NCLR, did not call any meeting of the council in 4 years. Even if it was a preparatory meeting, chaired by the Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh and only bringing together the members from the civil society (while the NCLR is also including 5 cabinet ministers and 10 chief ministers), this marks an interesting step.

During this meeting of June 26<sup>th</sup>, in which Rajagopal, leader of Ekta Parishad, was present, several proposals have been made. The main one is to put a ban on the establishment of Special Economic Zones on tribal areas and agricultural land. This measure appears to be essential to protect access to land for Adivasis, as SEZs are one of the major cause of eviction and degradation of land. This proposal, along with others, will be considered during a meeting of the full NCLR. Now the question is to know when the full NCLR will meet...

## THE JAN SAMWAD YATRA IN VIDEO

For more than 9 months now, the Jan Samwad Yatra team, led by Rajagopal P.V., is travelling through India to meet people who are struggling for their rights and against poverty. You can now discover their stories through short videos: a village of Jharkhand struggling against mining companies grabbing their land, the situation of people of North-East, between military forces and dams projects, the problems encountered by the yatra in Bihar, and many others...

These films are made by Jatan Media for Environmental Communication, an organization founded by the film-maker Pravin Pagare. Through videos, this organization aims to support movements working on environmental issues, especially Ekta Parishad. It also provides support to film-makers who want to do

films in India.

Videos on the Jan Samwad Yatra are available on our website : [www.ektaparishad.com](http://www.ektaparishad.com) (and new videos are regularly added)

To contact Jatan Media : [jatanmec@gmail.com](mailto:jatanmec@gmail.com)



## JAN SATYAGRAHA MANGO TREES : PLANT WITH US 100 000 TREES FOR JUSTICE!

Jan Satyagraha is a campaign for rights, to which the issue of environment is closely linked with. The 100 000 people who will march next October are landless, small-scale farmers, fishermen, etc. Some of them also earn their livelihood by collecting forest products. All these people share the fact that their livelihood depends on natural resources. Therefore, their struggle for access to land, water and forest is also a struggle to defend and protect the environ-

ment.

To highlight the importance of environment in the campaign, we decided to plant 100 000 trees (or more!) from now on until the end of the march Jan Satyagraha 2012. Marchers will plant a tree in their village before coming to Gwalior on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, people living between Gwalior and Delhi are invited to plant trees in their garden, and volunteers will plant trees on the roadside of the march in October. Of course, everyone, wherever he or she is living, is invited to plant a tree, a mango tree or one suitable to the place of plantation. It is a way to take part of the campaign, a way to raise the issue of environment and rights to land and livelihood of poor communities, a way to symbolize and support the 100 000 marchers... and a way to make the world greener !

To participate to the Jan Satyagraha tree plantation campaign, visit our page: [www.ektaparishad.com](http://www.ektaparishad.com).

To inform us of your participation, or to give a message of support to the marchers and get more information, please contact us at [jansatyagraha.trees@gmail.com](mailto:jansatyagraha.trees@gmail.com)



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

## THE FOREST RIGHTS ACT AFTER FOUR YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION



In 2007, Ekta Parishad led the March Janadesh. 25000 people on the road from Gwalior to Delhi to ask for access to land and livelihood resources. One demand of Janadesh was the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA). Basically, this law is meant for Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD) to obtain land titles and access to their rights. They can get land titles on land they were cultivating before December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005, and are still cultivating, and get use rights to minor forest produce, grazing land, etc. The March Janadesh has been a decisive action for the implementation of the act, which has been notified on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. After more than 4 years, the government just published an assessment of the application of the Forest Rights Act. If land titles have been granted (about 1 263 000), many claims are still pending or have been rejected (in total, more than 3 220 000 claims have been submitted). Many reasons can explain this situation, but the main one

is that it is often very difficult for claimants to prove that they fulfill the criteria of the law. For example, people who are not registered as Scheduled Tribes have to prove that their family has been residing in the forest since more than 75 years...

Ekta Parishad's workers notice every day the various problems encountered by forest dwellers to make their rights recognized under the Forest Rights Act. Rajagopal P.V. tries to raise this issue to the higher lever. One letter he wrote in February 2012 to the Minister of Tribal Affairs, Mr Kishore Chandra Deo, had an interesting effect. In this mail Rajagopal gives a clear statement on about the implementation of the FRA: "The information about Forest Rights Act is not properly passed on to the tribal communities, forms are not available, community claims are almost nil and the poor people are still at the mercy of police and forest department. In many places Adivasis are evicted, arrested and ill-treated in spite of their claim being genuine." Following this letter, on May 24<sup>th</sup>, Mr Kishore Chandra Deo sent a letter to the chief ministers of 17 states to bring their attention on these problems, highlighting the high rejection rates of claims made under the FRA. This letter of the Minister of Tribal Affairs is recognition of the fact that FRA is not properly implemented and is not fulfilling its purpose of protecting forest dwellers. We can hope this letter from the Minister will be a step to improve the situation.

The data about the implementation of FRA can be found on the website of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs: <http://tribal.nic.in>

## "OUT OF CONTROL", THE MINING COMPANIES IN INDIA

"Out of control", this is how the NGO Human Rights Watch qualifies the mining sector in India in a report published in June. Based on field research in Goa, Karnataka and extensive review of documentation, the report called "Out of control : Mining regulatory failure and human rights in India" explores the mining industries practices in the country, their consequences and the role of central and state governments. The assessment of HRW is alarming: "because of a dangerous mix of bad policies, weak institutions, and corruption, government oversight and regulation of India's mining industry is largely ineffectual. The result is chaos. » The report first considers illegal mining, which represents a huge part of mining activities (according to an estimation of 2010, there are about 82000 instances of illegal mining in India). But the report shows that even legal mining is often not complying with the laws and respecting human rights. The states are not playing their role of regulation, when they are not involved themselves in these illegal practices. HWR points out key issues which lead to this situation: conflicts of interests (companies commission and pay the reports on environmental impacts on the base of which

clearances are granted or denied); lack of means to monitor properly the mines (only a few dozen officials are responsible for this monitoring across the country); corruption which extends has been shown through numerous scandals. From this assessment, the report gives recommendations to improve the current situation: change the practices leading to conflicts of interests, strengthening means of regulation and control, focusing the environmental clearance process on human rights, etc. These measures are urgent, as the practices of some mining companies are seriously affecting local communities by threatening their health, water resources, environment and livelihood. This is what Ekta Parishad's workers and the participants of the Jan Samwad Yatra notice day after day.



Find the report on HWR website: [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org).



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