

## The Satyagraha proves successful in Orissa

Ekta Parishad Orissa has started a Yatra (march) on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2007. After covering all 30 districts of the State, the marchers started a sit-in at Bhubaneswar on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2007. Politicians, intellectuals and activists came from 22 districts of Orissa to show their solidarity. They were all protesting against the industrial and mining forces that have deteriorated the basic life condition of the people. Indeed, the water resources and the left out forest patches for the villagers are looted for the mining and industrial purpose; agriculture is decreasing due to the domination of these activities. In February 2004, 10000 tribals, dalits and landless people of Orissa had already heard the never fulfilled promises of the Chief Minister himself.

But this time, after 159 days of sit-in the issues of the people have eventually been heard: on 13<sup>th</sup> August, the Orissa Chief Minister has sent one High Level Delegation to call off the Satyagraha (non-violent protest) as the Government is ready to solve the land problems. The Delegation Team included the Chief Secretary of the State, the Minister for Mines, the Minister for Revenue and the Chairman of Orissa State Housing Board. They talked with the representatives of various tribal pockets of the State to find

alternatives to solve Land issues on an emergency basis. All State and National Level Media Representatives were present.

The Chief Secretary himself admitted that there had been bureaucratic failure in the execution of the Task Force that was declared by the Chief Minister in the past. The requests of the Satyagrahees, which the Orissa government promised to fulfil, are as follows:

- To reform the Task Force and include 5 Ekta Parishad members in the process (all of them are traditional tribal leaders);
- To redistribute available governmental land to the landless of the state;
- Protect tribals and landless (provide them necessary certificates, promote their self-development, protect their

natural / common resources);

- Prevent more land grabbing for industrial / mining purposes.

For this reason, the government will launch a 6 months campaign (called "My Land and My Homeland") in each district sub-division to resolve land disputes. They will also allocate 50 million Rupees to the Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation of Orissa (a semi-government organization).



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### Future Plans

From now on, Ekta Parishad Orissa will develop 3 future Plans:

1. Organise a State Level Workshop based on the experience of the Chetana Yatra, where all stake holders from the State will take part, including Policy Makers and Intellectuals in order to solve cases more precisely.
2. Develop the regional Janadesh team and Ekta Kala Manch team (cultural branch of Ekta Parishad) to focus on the new perspectives.
3. Exert moral pressure on the Government through peace and non violent methods to make sure the promises are fulfilled.

### Meanwhile in other States...

In **Bihar**, the Assembly is debating the land issues as Ekta Parishad people continue to sit outside for the last 6 months.

In **Madhya Pradesh**, a protest organized in the district of Morena with 200 Adivasis got a rapid impact as the High Court ordered the state government to give possession to all people who have land title in paper but no effective land. Only 1 week after, already 8 Adivasis got land; the others will also get land soon. The Supreme Court has admitted our petition and issued a notice to the state of Madhya Pradesh and **Chhattisgarh** asking them to explain why they have not been able to settle the land claims of the poor people.

## Ekta Parishad in new Fields

### RAJASTHAN: 32 District Rallies on 2<sup>nd</sup> October!

A Rajasthani organization (CECODECON) will organize 14 District Rallies in North Rajasthan in support of Janadesh. Besides, in case some of the people marching in Janadesh get arrested, at least 3000 people in Rajasthan will be ready to start walking from Jaipur (State capital). Otherwise, 1000 will join the Janadesh yatrees in Mathura (22<sup>nd</sup> October). They also plan to send 1000 letters to the Prime Minister and submit 200 land cases.

After a meeting in Udaipur, a Janadesh support group was formed, led by ASTA organization. They will organize a rally in each of the 18 remaining districts of Rajasthan. They will also submit 100 land cases and will send 1000 postcards to PM.

### GUJARAT: Support Group Meeting and Discussion with the State Governor

"Janadesh Gujarat", as they have named themselves, will organize one State level rally and 30 district level rallies. Following their demand, Ekta Parishad will send 10000 friendship bands in Ahmedabad. Furthermore, 100 land cases will be submitted for Janadesh and 5000 postcards will be sent to the Prime Minister of India. Rajagopal P.V. (President of Ekta Parishad) also had a good meeting with the Governor of Gujarat, who is supporting the Janadesh campaign.



## Getting closer to the Decision Makers of India

Rajagopal P.V. met the former Prime Minister of India (**Mr. V.P.Singh**) on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2007. In spite of his poor health condition, he is willing to be present during the inauguration of the march in Gwalior. He will also welcome us once we arrive in New Delhi at the end of the month of October. His presence and support are essential to get through and reach the government officials.

A meeting was also organized with the Minister of Home Affairs (**Mr. Jaiswal**), who agreed to write to the Prime Minister asking him to organize an appointment with Ekta Parishad to discuss the land issues.

On the same day, Rajagopal and Ramesh met **Mrs. Nejma Heftulla**, who will call around 50 tribal members of parliament for an extraordinary session with Ekta Parishad on 6<sup>th</sup> September.

They also discussed with **Mrs. Narmala Deshpande**, a close friend of Sonia Gandhi (President of National Congress Party) and one of the 3 women candidates short listed for President of India. She was also very active in the Bhoodan movement and she will directly ask Sonia Ji to look into the Janadesh demands.

On 30<sup>th</sup> August, Ekta Parishad invited bureaucrats and experts, especially **Mrs. Aruna Roy**, who brought about the Right to Information Act, in India. A lot of ideas came on how to frame our arguments with the government.

## News on Line

- Newly launched website of Ekta Canada:

[www.ektacanada.org](http://www.ektacanada.org)

- Canadian Press Club published our press note on their website at this address:

<http://www.pressclub.on.ca/>

- 7 min film on You Tube about Janadesh:

<http://fr.youtube.com/watch?v=PWR436WFLU>

- In the latest newsletter of Frère des Hommes, "Résonances Asiatiques", a long editorial is dedicated to Janadesh 2007 and preparations:

<http://www.fdh.org/resonances/RA15-EN/RA15-EN.htm>

## World Wide Connections

→ **Japan:** Professor Keibo Oiwa visited Janadesh office on 27<sup>th</sup> August: he felt concerned about the land issues in India and was impressed by the organization of Janadesh foot march. This new contact will help Ekta Parishad to create more connections with Japanese organizations.

→ **Switzerland:** Hans-Jürg Pfaff has presented his film "Rajas Reise" for the first time on 21<sup>st</sup> August in Zurich. The function was fully booked and the public had a really positive reaction. It was also a good opportunity to announce Janadesh and Land for Life marches. Now, Hans-Jürg is planning to make a short educational version (around 30 minutes) to be used in European schools to teach young people about non-violent methods of fighting poverty.

A song was composed for Ekta Parishad & Land For Life by famous Swiss artists: Linard Bardill and Lunik. It can be heard by following this link: [http://www.landforlife.ch/backup/data/data/LfL\\_Song](http://www.landforlife.ch/backup/data/data/LfL_Song).

→ **France:** 2 movies about Janadesh are available in French (thanks to FdH, Peuples Solidaires, Emmanuel Louail). The Letter Campaign to the PM of India is growing fast (more than 31000 letters distributed by Peuples Solidaires!)

-On 10-11-12 August, the "Festival du Bout du Monde" (Brittany) was the opportunity to collect foot prints and mobilize public about Janadesh. Frères des Hommes will organize an associations' forum on 8-9 September there.

-On 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> August, a gathering of about 30 organizations took place in Nantes. During the 1st week-end of October, Confédération paysanne will also organize an event there about Agriculture's relationship to urban areas.

-On 1st September, a rock festival will conclude a 10 km march in Normandy.

→ **Canada:** A world wide women's association will soon spread an interview of Jill Car-Harris from Ekta Canada to 8000 women groups around the world. They focus on mobilisation and empowerment of women to fight for their rights. Besides, on 2nd October, a non violent rally will take place in Toronto's City Hall.

→ **USA:** An Interfaith Group on Non-Violence will gather at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, also on 2nd Oct.

## Land For Life

The organisation "Land for Life" is a neutral platform, which is supported by various partners, among them the CESCO Association in Zurich, the Bern Declaration, Solifonds and Remei AG. This organisation thinks that the problem of Land Rights is a vital factor in global poverty. In many countries, having land at ones' disposal is the key to being able to live with dignity. For this reason, they are organising *Land for Life* solidarity march from Bern to Geneva with at least 50 participants, from September 26<sup>th</sup> to October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Two aims in mind: draw attention to the Janadesh 2007 protest march in India and remind people of global problems concerning land rights.

Through this march, people will share solidarity with Ekta Parishad, they will sensitise UN commissions to the issues of Land Rights and corruption in India. LFL will also mobilise young people giving them a chance to take an active role and to exchange experiences with other young people in India.

**On 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> September**, several events will take place in the Reithalle (Bern) with the announcement of the results of an art competition focussing on "land is life". Madras Café from UK will provide Indian food. More solidarity footprints will be collected on white banners and taken to India.

**On October 2<sup>nd</sup>**, a rally will be organised in front of UN to draw world wide attention on the Land Rights issues in India. For a donation or membership please contact: [www.landforlife.ch](http://www.landforlife.ch) or send an e-mail to [info@landforlife.ch](mailto:info@landforlife.ch).



## Announcements

Approximately 150 foreigners registered to come for Janadesh from Asia, Africa, Europe, Americas... We still would like to welcome more people, especially during the second half of the march!

We are also looking for more individual donors, willing to support one marcher during the 27 days. You can still send your donations!

**For more information, please write us at**  
[janadesh2007@gmail.com](mailto:janadesh2007@gmail.com)

## A busy month of September!

1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup>	Meeting of the leaders of 1000 marchers in Dholpur (Rajasthan)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Youth get together in Chaata
4 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting of the drafting Committee of the final proposal to govt of India
5 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting of voluntary and people's organisations in Haryana to announce a Janadesh Committee
6 <sup>th</sup>	Meeting with 50 parliamentarians with Nejma Heftulla Possible meeting with Rural Development Minister during the 1 <sup>st</sup> week of Sept.
8 <sup>th</sup>	Press Conference in Punjab
11 <sup>th</sup>	One day march in Warda from Gandhi's Ashram to Vinoba Bhave's Ashram (Maharashtra) Possible meeting with the PM during the 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Sept. Ekta Parishad wishes to organize a programme to carry a flame from <i>Raj Ghat</i> (the place where Gandhi is resting) to Gwalior, by a group of Adivasis & Dalits
30 <sup>th</sup>	Arrival of Yves Berthelot (Senior Research fellow of UNITAR) in Delhi to advocate Land issues among important people and participate to Janadesh

## What after Janadesh?

Janadesh is neither an event nor a temporary action. It is a process which started 30 years ago, when Ekta Parishad began working at the grass root level. Janadesh foot march is the most important action ever to bring the People's Verdict to the Central Government, but the process will not stop there (as the Indian Government might hope). The march is a step and it will be a starting point for more actions:

- Back to village level actions:** The foot march will open the Janadesh year, during which people will go back to their villages and increase their pressure on their State governments. The landless people will occupy lands they need, forcing the State to listen to their Verdict. This will strengthen the existing State offices of Ekta Parishad;
  - Birth of New Ekta Parishad States:** Along the Janadesh process, consultations and Assemblies of the Deprived were conducted. Thanks to this, Ekta Parishad will settle new offices and will be present in 13 States in stead of 8 States up to now;
  - Advocacy, documentation & communication:** Meanwhile, a huge process of documentation will bring more and more material (videos of Janadesh, among others) to illustrate the land struggle and justify the needs for agrarian reforms;
  - Follow-up with the Central and State governments:** Moreover, in case we succeed and the 3 "aadesh" (directions) are followed by the Government, there will be a lot to do in terms of efficient implementation of the tools for Land Reform at all levels;
  - International Networking:** Ekta Parishad Bhopal and the NCCL in Delhi will follow up the information and advocacy process with international partners. Janadesh 2007 is a great opportunity to join hands for a collective action with world wide movements already working on Land Rights, such as MST in Brazil or Via Campesina.
- The immediate Post-Janadesh period will be composed of discussion with decision makers and documenting the whole process. Whatever the results, the Post-Janadesh actions will continue at least up to the next General Election (planned to happen in March 2009).



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