



JAN SAMWAD YATRA,
ALREADY 2 MONTHS
OF TRAVEL
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ARE LAND RIGHTS
HUMAN RIGHTS ?
PARTICIPATE TO THE
ONLINE DEBATE OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS DAY
see page 4

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JAN SAMWAD YATRA, BEFORE LEAVING TAMIL NADU

After 13 days in Tamil Nadu and many meetings, Rajagopal spoke about the situation in the state: "Almost every day new issues came up. People were raising questions related to their life in a way for which we had no answers. In a fast moving India, growth is the mantra. However, it is becoming more and more difficult to answer many of those questions." Many questions are concerning displacements, Adivasis are wondering why they are being displaced, what was their crime for which they are being punished. They are also concerning Panchami land, the land assigned to Dalits (untouchables): why it is not distributed to them ? Nuclear and electric power plants projects, which lead to the displacement of many villages, have to be question also. "While we appreciate that for growth and development electricity is important, we should also question this craze for generating electrical power by destroying peo-

ple's power.[...] By using human energy and human potential we can promote a better model of development rather than looking at industrialization as the only way to progress." Insensitivity of government officials is another recurrent issue, as people dependent on welfare programmes can't get anything without paying a bribe. Finally, the problem of urban poverty came up very forcefully during the meeting in Chennai. Tamil Nadu is claiming to be number 1 in the country in urbanization. But do they know that urbanization, for millions of people, means living in expanding slums ? Facing all these issues, many organizations are working among Adivasis, Dalits, fisherfolks, urban poor... But the problem is that they are not united. According to Rajagopal, "one important task will be to bring these groups and individuals together so that they can become a force to impact the government policies".

THE YATRA IN ANDHRA PRADESH

After Tamil Nadu, the Jan Samwad Yatra travelled to Andhra Pradesh. While on record, the state carried out its land-reform in 1955, in reality, large sections of the populations, especially Dalits and Adivasis, do not own land. The recent laws like the one about Special Economic Zones (SEZ) have been alienating many people from land.



SEZ, Special Economic Zone. The Yatra started its journey in Andhra Pradesh with a visit of [Srihari Kota Colony](#).



Meeting in Srihari Kota colony

Settled here after their displacement from their land in 1965, inhabitants worked hard to make their new land cultivatable. In 2006, they are again facing displacement, as their new land is supposed to welcome a new Special Economic Zone (SEZ). Villagers initially resisted the acquisition : they were unwilling to go through another round of displacement, and they knew that with the financial compensation for their land, well below the open market prices, they would be unable to acquire new land to settle. Each time the families organized themselves to struggle together, they were attacked by the goons hired by the SEZ. Breaking the unity of the community and creating fear among the people, the SEZ weakened many of them. Today, a group of 31 families is still opposing the acquisition of their land. Among them, Mr. Seshaiyah, who explained that the group has filed a case in the High Court against the acquisition. But their case is pending for 3 years and Mr. Seshaiyah is asking : "What right does the court have in delaying judgment in such a case where many people's lives are at stake? If they had passed a judgment and this judgment was against us, we could have at least approached the Supreme Court".

No job for local people. In [Menakuru](#), it is a little bit the same story : agricultural land have been used to settle a Special Economic Zone, leaving evicted farmers without sufficient resources to purchase a new piece of land. In this village where many people are weavers, the settlement of an apparel park could have been an opportunity to be employed. But indus-

trials prefer to hire and train people from outside the area than hiring local skilled youth : these local youth have greater sense of bonding and hence are more likely to unionize. This situation causes forced internal migration and breaking down the unity of communities, the initial steps of urbanization and industrialization.

Power Plant. Mr. Tirupati Rao, a farmer from Kanpattipalam, explains that over the last 5 generations, about 2500 small farmers cultivated about 5000 acres of land, which is known for being one of the most fertile lands in the [Prakasam](#) district. In 2009, 2500 acres have been identified for a project of power plant. The State issued a notice for taking the land under the Land Acquisition Act (a law that allows the State to acquire land for public purpose). Local farmers denounce the absence of public consultation and the use of brutal ways to grab their land. Villagers approached the Court in 2009, and they got the stay order in March 2011. This judgement gave a big boost for the entire movement. Villagers give their full support for the Jan Samwad Yatra and are willing to join the struggle.



In Kanpattipalam

Mining and pollution. The Yatra visited the village of Komipali in [Khammam](#) district which is badly affected by the existence of the mine exploited since 2006 by the public corporation Singareni. 1800 acres of land of Adivasis, Dalits and minority sections of society have been taken by the corporation with almost no compensation. Here again, not a single person of the village received a job at the mining company in spite of the promises made by the officials.

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

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Mrs Sugna, an elderly woman of the village, noted that the only things the villagers got from the mine are acute pollution and several diseases. She also raises questions: what about the state's accountability and constitutional commitment ?

Original initiatives. In Hasanpatti in [Warangal](#) district, people developed original ways to avoid or resolve land issues. For example, on the initiative of the district collector Ms Karuna, land records are displayed on the school building's wall. This initiative, taken 2 years back, received tremendous response from the



Land records on the school's wall, Hasanpatti

villagers: it creates legal awareness among inhabitants, it helps them to speak about their land issues with the local administration which already resolved 49 problems related to land. The Yatra also visited the

Bhoomi Cell, a group which is trying to assist the poor and the landless to fight for their land rights. With the help of lawyers and experts, the group is successful in resolving problems. Seeing the efficiency of those initiatives, Ms. Karuna is enthusiastic to replicate the same model for other areas.

Before leaving Andhra Pradesh. Before continuing their route towards Karnataka, the team of the yatra

had a [review meeting](#) on the situation in Andhra Pradesh. Here, communities are facing many problems : evictions from their land in the name of development programs, evictions from their assigned land, considerable delays for settling land disputes and redistribution demands, etc. Rajagopal spoke about those 15 days spent in Andhra Pradesh: "traveling through Andhra Pradesh, was like feeling more and more deeply the pain and distress people have been exposed to. [Their situation] only shows how insensitive the mainstream society can be towards the lives of the other classes of the society. The challenge is tilt the power relationship and the control over land and livelihood resources with the marginalized people." But Rajagopal also highlighted the positive elements that are emerging in Andhra Pradesh: the fact that there are strong movements for the rights of the poor people and their willingness to work together. Also the fact that there is in Hyderabad a strong advisory group putting its efforts to strengthen people's movements, and an institutional base committed in rural areas in the interest of the oppressed class. Compared to Kerala and Tamil Nadu, officials of Karnataka seem to be more sensitive to the issues of poor people. In Warangal for example, the collector and the joint collector are personally taking interest in the land reforms agenda. Finally, the president of Ekta Parishad concluded that "there are various dynamics happening in the state that need to be captured to bring the issues of the poor and marginalized on the forefront".

THE YATRA IN KARNATAKA

Karnataka is a large state in the South-West of India. Its capital, Bangalore, is known as the Indian capital of high technology. However, 56% of the population of Karnataka is working in the field of agriculture, and the state is also known for the presence of the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS), one of the association met by the yatra.



Rally in Bangalore. On November 19th, the yatra joined a rally of 2500 people organized in [Bangalore](#), in which many organizations participated who are working in slums and among Adivasis and Dalits. 95% of participants were women. The Secretary of Karnataka Dalit Mahila Vedike, Smt Yeshoda, spoke during the public meeting about the current situation : land-grabbing, displacement, threat threat and anti-poor policies. Projects of Karnataka Industrial Development Board, the corridor projects, express highways, the Nice company--all are acquiring land for making more profits and forgetting the miseries of the poor. As a result, the poor are becoming wage labourers. She posed questions about the benefits of all these high tech projects to the poor people: "what they are asking is only a small piece of land for cultivation

to feed their family. The government says adivasis are destroying the forest, but in fact they protect the forest. Others loot the forest and make money. Do we expect these thieves to protect us who have an eye on all our little resources?" Finally, members of the Karnataka Dalit Mahila Vedike are very concerned with the issues of Jan Satyagraha campaign and they also committed to join the larger action in October 2012.

Cultural and political awareness of Dalits. In [Tumkur](#), the yatra met the members of the Bhu Shakti Kendra. Since its creation in 1983, the organization had several successes in the defense of Dalits' rights. After an initial phase of mobilization in 400 villages, the Bhu Shakti Kendra focused on cultural awakening on land, forest and water resources. In 2005, the organization started building political awakening among the Dalit families. Their efforts have spread over 800 villages in 11 districts of Karnataka, and they have been worthwhile : 686 members have been elected at the panchayat (administrative entity formed by a group of villages) level. Since 2007, the organization is also involved in Electoral Reforms campaigning at the state and at the national level.



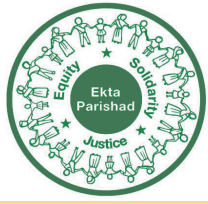
Rally in Bangalore



AFTER 18 DAYS
IN ANDHRA PRADESH
THE YATRA MOVED TO
KARNATAKA

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

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**NEXT MONTH
IN THE NEWSLETTER :
END OF THE ROUTE IN
KARNATAKA AND GOA,
AND FOCUS ON
MAHARASTRA**

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PAGES OF RAJAGOPAL
PV, EKTA PARISHAD
AND JAN SATYAGRAHA



Devadasi women in Bellary district

Devadasi women. In the district of [Bellary](#), the yatris were shocked to learn that in several villages, Dalit women are still forced to be Devadasi. In the tradition, Devadasi were women dedicated to a deity or to a temple, performing dance and music. During the British rule and after independence, Devadasi lost their traditional means and were more and more associated to prostitution. Outlawed in 1988, Devadasi practice still exists in India, and Devadasi women are facing many difficulties and discriminations: they have to provide sexual services to upper cast men, they can't get land for cultivation, they have many difficulties to receive the government services they are eligible for, they don't

have a home and live with their parents. Furthermore, their children are also harassed and discriminated against as they can't name their father.

Development projects and farmers' interests. A public rally was supposed to take place in [Gadag](#). But villagers who were supposed to participate were threatened and those who managed to come in spite of this were reluctant to speak openly. During a meeting with the Karnataka Rajya Sangs (KRRS), the yatris learned more about the situation in the region. Farmers are opposing different companies' projects, for example, the one by POSCO which would lead to their eviction and the loss of their livelihood resources. Farmers are not against giving up their land and are not against development but they are demanding development projects that help them. For example, they agreed to give 450 acres of land for an oil-extraction unit because this project is creating a market for their produces.



ROUTE OF THE YATRA IN DECEMBER

December 1st to 28th, MAHARASTRA :

Sangli | Satara | Ratnagiri | Sindhudurg | Raigad | Thane | Mumbai | Pune | Solapur | Latur | Osmanabad | Beed | Ahmednagar | Nashik | Nandurbar | Dhulia | Nandurbar | Jalgaon | Aurangabad | Jalna | Parbhani | Nanded | Hingoli | Washim | Buldhana | Akola | Amravati | Wardha | Yavatmal | Chandrapur | Nagpur | Gondia

December 29th to 31st, Chhattisgarh :

Raj Nandgaon | Kanker

~ And also ~

ONE DAY'S EXPERIENCE ON THE SAMWAD YATRA

Yesterday evening at 8 Pm, we arrived at Visva Jyothi Ashram. This is a boarding school which is lovingly managed by the 81 year old Sr. Maria Elizabeth. About twenty children live here, go to school and carry out different daily tasks. We were very graciously received and served a delicious evening meal. Eating with my hand was something that came easily from the beginning. Nevertheless, I always had to wait a bit, until the food cooled so that I didn't burn my fingers. The mattresses were indeed somewhat hard, but still I was able to sleep in a bed. Besides that, there were ceiling fans. The constant movement of air made for a comfortable climate—and kept the mosquitoes at bay! These luxuries—a bed and a fan—were only granted to me, Rajagopal, Ramesh and Yatish. The rest of the team slept in the neighbouring building on the floor. Now finally I felt a little bit better again. The tablets to relieve my diarrhea had finally begun to take effect. A half an hour after I woke up, there was breakfast. I learned that the children had been up since five o'clock. That was the rule in this ashram. After breakfast, the vehicles were packed and we got ready to leave again. Before we left there was a little time to take in the surroundings: there was a beautiful flower and vegetable garden as well as playing places for the children. For me the best thing was the western toilet—the first one I had seen since I joined the yatra. After we had thanked our host, we set off on our way to the first

meeting of the day, this was a Press Conference. After that, we had lunch and set off to visit a village. There, about 100 men and women had assembled. The local organization which had arranged this meeting, explained to people who we were and what the goal of the yatra was. After this, we are all introduced by name and country. Then came the 'presentation of the evidence'. Many of the Dalits who had experienced injustice came forward and explained their cases. These stories were captured in writing and on video camera. Beyond this, people gathered the relevant documents that showed the unjust displacement of rural people that is happening throughout India. In this village, eight people spoke, sometimes however there are twenty. Afterward, Rajagopal spoke to the villagers himself and to the Press who had come. At the end, a handful of earth from this village was put in the symbolic container (along with all the other earth from many villages visited during the yatra). Then we got up, said goodbye to the people and got back on our vans. For today, there would be no further meetings. For that reason, we were driving a longer distance than on other days. When we reached our evening accommodations (after a four hour drive), I could feel in my body the long and bumpy ride. To this local kind of road travel, it was still necessary for me to become acclimatized.

Pascal Woodtly, volunteer Ekta Parishad

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

PARTICIPATE TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS DAY, ONLINE AND ON THE GROUND

December 10th will be the Human Rights Day. Ekta Parishad will be celebrating the day among a prominent community of landless dalits in central Maharashtra as part of the Jan Samwad Yatra. But this year, Ekta Parishad will also celebrate the day online, with a debate on the Land Portal Community. Everyone is invited to post its comments (in English, French or Spanish) about land rights and human rights at this address: landportal.info/are-land-rights-human-rights. The aim of this debate is to gather information on the situation of land rights in different countries. Therefore, we would like to know what you see as the main land and livelihood problem in your country. You can post free comments, or answer to

three questions :

1. Are land rights (for the poor) human rights in your country?
2. Are the land violations (such as land grabbing) seen as land rights or otherwise? Are there interesting cases?
3. Are there many human rights defenders that are suffering a loss of civil rights because they are working on the land issue?

The result of this discussion will be used by South-South Solidarity to compile a report and share it on the December 10th human right event as a way of advocating people for the 2012 Global Land Movement campaign (southsouthsolidarity.org).

“JANADESH, PEOPLE’S VERDICT”, A DOCUMENTARY ONLINE



You can now watch the documentary “Janadesh, People’s verdict” online at www.quepo.org. A social documentary about the most important non-violent protest movement since Gandhi’s times. A march in 2007 in India where 25000 men and women walked through 350 km to demand better human living conditions. Since its release on October 2nd, 2010, many things have happened, many other marches have been initiated and many awakenings of conscience have been transformed worldwide into

action. During this time at Quepo we have continued organizing screenings and discussions with experts about the various themes that the film invites to discuss: non-violence, civic participation, forms of struggle, access to land, and so on. Accompanying the documentary, we also present a [tutorial](#) (only available in Spanish and Catalan), created with the collaboration of the [Escola de Cultura de Pau](#), as support for the teachers’ practical work regarding the above mentioned issues. Quepo is a nonprofit foundation dedicated to create and distribute social content audiovisual materials. Our goal is to encourage social issues debate, thereby we need and ask like-minded people to join us. Please feel free to contact us at our e-mail address info@quepo.org, and we will be pleased to respond.

Nicole Etchevers, Quepo

EKTA PARISHAD ON THE COMMITTEE ON FOOD SECURITY

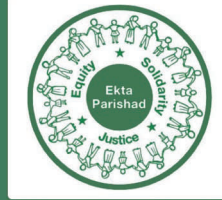
Ekta Parishad was invited to be the focal point on the Committee on Food Security (CFS), a group within UN/FAO at the invitation of FIAN following the Ekta Europe-Geneva Conference in September. Ekta Parishad agreed to join this international process, and Nicholas Barla from Orissa and me were at the CFS in October to make this representation and at the same time to extend the visibility of Ekta Parishad at the international level. Regulation of land acquisition in India is not sufficient without regulation through international law or convention on land investment. Similarly regulation through a national land reform process in India needs compatible regulations on agrarian reform at the international level, in order to create an enabling environment for advancing people’s rights at the local level. The expansion of land investment and land markets has been happening in India and elsewhere at a rapid rate in the past decade, which is threatening small farmers and small-scale producers’ livelihoods. FAO through the CFS has actively pursued setting guidelines, namely the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of the Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGs), as a way to offset this trend. Ekta Parishad is now also part of the coordinating committee of the Civil Society

Mechanism (CSM), the formal body of civil society groups, which is engaged in the formulation of the guidelines and meets on an annual basis.

VGs are about 300 paragraphs in length that look at all different types of land (government land, indigenous peoples’ land, pasture lands etc.) and define legal limits for the states in permitting large-scale commercialization on those different land types, keeping in mind the exigencies of maintaining basic food security. It is not surprising that these regulations are not acceptable to large-scale land investors, and so they are also pushing for their own guidelines, like the RAI (Responsible Agricultural Investment) guidelines that have been put together by the World Bank. This offers some resistance for the VGs to be passed.

The important issue that emerged at the VGs discussion was responsible investment that is providing an enabling environment for the small farmer/producer. Specific antinomies were found on issues of public natural resources, customary tenure, informal tenure and investment and concessions. There was clearly a variety of opinion which made the drafting difficult.

Jill Carr-Harris



PARTICIPATE TO THE ONLINE DEBATE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DAY landportal.info/are-land-rights-human-rights

SEE THE EXCELLENT DOCUMENTARY « JANADESH, PEOPLE’S VERDICT » AT www.quepo.org