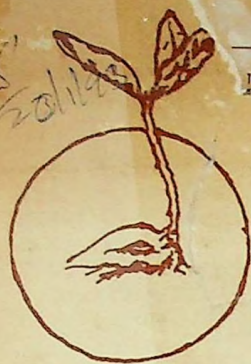


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Janashakti

(for private circulation only)

January 1993

vol. 3. No. 1

ADIVASI SANGAMAM

On October 12, 1992 Mananthavady, a hill town in Wayanad district, Kerala, witnessed an unusual gathering. About 2000 tribals from three states representing the Koruga, Irular, Jenukuruba, Kurichiar and Soliga tribes converged here amidst much fanfare, singing and dancing to the accompaniment of tribal musical instruments. Tribals of South India ventured out of their traditional hamlets and converged at Mananthavady with seven "Adijyothis" (torches) symbolizing tribal solidarity. This marked the beginning of a week long Sangamam of Adivasis. It was a solemn occasion. The same day 190 years ago, the adivasis of Wayanad, led by a Kurichiya tribal leader, Thalakkal Chandu, fought colonialism and destroyed an English bastion at Panamaram fort, 8 kilometres from Mananthavady.

Adijyothis were brought by tribals from seven tribal areas including Edichikkotta, Chamarajanagar, Mandelpeta in Karnataka, Ponnani in Tamil Nadu and Edakkal, Ponkuzhi and Wayanad in Kerala. The jyothis were received at the Thalakkal Chandu kotta at Panamaram by Edakkal Madhavan, Secretary of the Adivasi Samrakshana Samithi. From Panamaram, jyothis were taken by Adivasi relay runners to the Karinthandan Nagar at Mananthavady High School grounds where it was received by former MLA, K K Annan.



The torch at the venue was lighted by C K Janu, chairwoman of the Sangamam committee and president of the Adivasi Vikasana Pravartakha Samithy.

October 12 is important not only for the adivasis of Wayanad but for indigenous people all over the world. For it was on this day in 1492 that Christopher Columbus landed on Watling Island (now San Salvador Island in the Bahamas), which was seen as the beginning of the suppression of the indigenous people. Even as North America, Spain and Portugal planned to celebrate Columbus' voyage to America, the indigenous people decided to make it a celebration of 500 years of resistance and from

October 12 began the United Nations' "Year of the Indigenous People".

The genesis

However, not even the most ardent champion of the tribal cause can claim the simple folk of Wayanad, Coorg or Bastar have an inkling of who Columbus was. How, then did the idea of the Sangamam originate? The Secretary of Solidarity, Jose Sebastian, working with the tribals of Wayanad said that over the last few years, tribal people, academicians, activists, NGO's and anthropologists have expressed the need for a meeting of the various South Indian tribal groups. C R Bijoy, an activist, said that since 1989 there have small groups demanding a gathering of southern Adivasis.

(contd on page 4)

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revised
8/1/93
(10/6/93)
14/1

Fedina, Bangalore
December 1992

Dear friend,

It is a long time — yes pretty long time — since we wrote to you a personal letter. May be last year we wrote to wish you a meaningful 1992. It is coming to an end and look what a mess we are in during the last month of this year. Ayodhya kept us on our feet throughout the year, but it has "burnt us alive" in December, the embers of which will continue flashing the sparks of violence, riots and what not during the days to come.

The demolition of the Mosque and the decision who will build what on this controversial site will have its long lasting effects. It will inflict all of us like the pestering wounds. We are disgraced, dismayed and at times we live in fear too. There is a suspicion growing among us. So far we lived in a kind of harmony, we tolerated each other, each other's gods, religion and all that. Now that the line of division is drawn, we are unable to forecast the events to come. We feel anxious and sometimes frustrated. All this happens with us, the civilized industrialized and modernized people. With this we are moving into the 21st century. Another step, another year. This society called the "mainstream society" brings everyday darker clouds with storms of destruction and division instead of hope and liberation.

Moving away from the "main roads of civilization" we move into the by-lanes and narrow paths taking us into the mountainous regions. Some trees are still standing straight only to be chopped down by the merciless "industrialized and civilized man". Some animals still move about with distinct fear of being spotted and killed for its commercial value, again by the "industrialized and civilized man". Some virgin land, lush green, a sight to the thirsty eyes, are there lying around to be raped by the so-called "modern man" and some stones, strong and upholding their heads in dignity, are there only to be subdued, cut into pieces and sold in the market again by the same so called civilized man.

Wandering through these and reflecting on the events to follow we moved deeper into the sloppy hills where we saw a group of people, dark in complexion, curly haired, short in stature, men and women, all attired in their traditional costumes, moving slowly (there is no hurry) in rhythm with the nature, singing, swinging, dancing — all in accordance with the surroundings. Their faces had no anxiety, no stress, but showed signs of joy — signs of hope. Surprised we moved closer. How can they be so happy? How can they be so hopeful these days?

We faced them and they faced us. They smiled: we tried to return that smile. They greeted us with hope and we were perplexed — our eyes questioning them. They understood — they shared their hope — they explained and we heard, they spoke and we listened: Karinthandan a youth belonging to their clan, a Paniya of Wayanad, is a legendary figure who lived there many years ago. The white man was ruling them. The white man moving in the planes. He wanted to go up the hills. In those days there were no roads, no paths. Thick forest was seen everywhere. There were animals, plenty in number. But the white man wanted to reach the top of Wayanad hills. He did not succeed. But Karinthandan knew very nook and corner of these forests. He was born here and he had moved through these jungle. He used to go to the planes. He knew all the winding paths in this forest. White man came to know about Karinthandan. He caught him and asked him to show the path. The white man did not come alone. Many others came with him. Not just a path, they cut a road to Wayanad. Once reaching Wayanad they killed Karinthandan. They wanted to tell the world that it is they who explored the road to Wayanad. Their vehicles moved. The road was motorable.

**We Wish
You
a Peaceful and Prosperous
New Year**

But, our Karinthandan though dead, would not sit idle, his soul became restless and in vengeance he caused frequent accidents on this road. To solve this awful situation, the white man gathered many men who knew witch-craft. They conducted manthras and poojas and finally captured the soul of our Karinthandan

and chained him to a tree at a place called Lakkidi — which is the entrance gate of Wayanad. The tree is still there. You can see the chain hanging at Lakkidi by the side of the road. We believe and hope that one day Karinthandan will break these chains of bondage and will liberate himself. That is our hope. That will be the day of our liberation as well.

As they moved, we were stunned. There is hope. Quietness engulfed our disturbed mind. The sun was setting in Wayanad. The red rays were clearly seen spreading its sparkle on the green trees and bushes. We stood there — do not know how long — and it was dark when we awoke to this world. There was peace around us, we felt peace within us.

Dear friend, we like to share these signs of peace and hope with you. These are our wishes which we received from the Paniya tribals and we extend them to you. May you too enjoy these moments of hope of liberation in your life too!! Hopefully we will meet again.

Yours sincerely,

We from FEDINA

AYODHYA AND AFTER; Reflections.....

H Lobo

Everyone agrees that Sunday 6th December 1992 will be considered as the darkest blot in the history of Secular Democratic India. All persons who have their heads on their shoulders, condemn this act of vandalism. It shouldn't have happened. Now that it has happened, the tempers have risen high, the emotions are badly hurt and retaliations have taken place. The highest court of the land was taken for a ride. Of course, the days that follow will tell us the aftermath of such ghastly happenings.

It is also time now to seriously consider the separation of religion from politics. Political parties and politicians have used religion to seek power and hob-knobbed with it for their own convenience. A phase in the Indian history has arrived to distance one from the other. Let religion be confined to the houses and places of worship. In this connection, we need certain code of conducts for ourselves:

- a ban on political parties and politicians to mingle religion with politics.
- a ban on government and all these who are part of it, to participate in any religious functions in their official capacities.
- a ban on display of any religious symbols in all government buildings, offices, transport, public places etc.
- a ban on all religious processions on the main roads.
- a ban on the use of public address system in all religious places, (except the internal public address system).

All of us or most of us believe in God. We also affirm day in and day out that He/She is One. Let our different forms of relating and that One being, if it has become a source of disaster, vandalism, brutality and what not, be restricted to individuals in the warmth of their houses or in the enclosure of their places of worship. On the contrary, let us come together to celebrate the cultural festivals of the great land that bring us closer to each other. □

Editorial

BETWEEN THE SKY AND THE EARTH

The Nobel Peace Prize of 1992 was rightly awarded to 33 year old Rigoberta Menchu of Guatemala. By this the Norwegian Nobel Committee acknowledged the struggle of indigenous people not only in Guatemala but all over the world. The United Nations has declared 1993 "the International Year of Native Peoples". This year, there will be a concentration of efforts all over to fight for the approval of a universal declaration of the rights of indigenous people.

On the other hand, there is the celebration of the quincentennial of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America. In this context, one has to seriously examine and critique the effects of such "discoveries" and "invasions" on the native people of the place. History has recorded and hailed the (in)glorious acts of warriors, discoverers, adventurers from the (un)civilized world on the indigenous people. They were massacred, killed and communities were mercilessly annihilated. It was thought that it is the civilized whiteman's right to subdue everything on the face of this earth and that he had the divine sanction to destroy, subdue and establish his empire.

This phenomena is not restricted to the West alone, but has taken place in every nation and country. Even in India, the plight of the indigenous people is excruciating. They are driven out from the forests, their basic and natural habitat, in the name of development and modernization. The non-tribals have practically subdued them, encroached their land and treated them worse than slaves. Today most of the native people hang between the sky and earth, having no place in society, no rights to defend themselves. They are left open to be exploited by religions, political and other vested interest parties.

In this context, Menchu stands is a symbol pleading for a rightful place and just demands of the indigenous people. All over, so also in many parts of India, the indigenous people have raised their voice and are becoming increasingly aware and organizing themselves to demand for their rightful share in the resources which were theirs. Let these voices be not misunderstood as a cry towards dis-integration of the nation and forcefully be subdued, but rather be recognized as the voices of the people who have been the builders of this planet, the protectors of nature and cultures, and who today demand a rightful share in the resources which were theirs. Let many Menchus rise in every part of the globe, from every community of native people and fight for Peace and Justice.

There were assorted meetings in Atapadi, Thiruvananthapuram and other places. Tribals began interacting. This led to a situation where the Adivasis were able to contact and mobilize all kinds of people. The result was this Sangamam.

The bulk of the delegates were from Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Groups from Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Manipur, Rajasthan and West Bengal came as an expression of solidarity. Many of them had never ventured out of their areas before. The spectacle of so many of *their* people from far-flung areas, speaking different languages and wearing varied costumes, was a new experience.

National Colloquium

A colloquium on issues concerning the adivasis was held. Groups of adivasis from different states were seen exchanging ideas with the help of interpreters. Adivasis representatives presented reports on the state of affairs in their regions. The problems were the same everywhere - land alienation, displacement, eviction problems, atrocities, loss of rights to habitat and forest produce.

A number of priority demands and a plan of action emerged during the discussion. It was decided to form a federation of South Indian Adivasi groups to be named the South Zone Adivasi Forum, which will organize a gathering of Tribals once every year.

The major demands are: one hectare of land to each tribal family; special court to deal with tribal problems; amendments to allow tribals their traditional rights to forest produce; primary education in the tribal language; filling up of all posts reserved for tribals and at least 50 percent jobs in the Forest department; and decision making by tribals with regard to plans for their development.

The reports and speeches were translated to Hindi, English, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam. A delighted tribal said: "It's wonderful to think that so many adivasis from so many places have exactly the same perceptions. It gives a feeling of strength and unity for all of us."

The sessions were addressed by Prof. A.K. Kishku from West Bengal, Jharkhand leader Dr. Ram Dayal Munda, former Vice Chancellor of Ranchi University, and others. Dr. Munda talked about traditional tribal values which the world extolled, but which, in practice, were denigrated and derided. As a result, indigenous people were imbibing inferior mainstream values which ultimately destroyed them. Explaining this, he said: "The world community appreciates the tribal concept of equality. We do not have caste. The rest of society is striving to achieve this. Yet there is a contradiction. Tribal society is emulating, copying, the mainstream society around us.... The same contradictions are there

Dr. Walter Fernandez of the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, who had come down here to witness the functions, said the Sangamam represented a mid-point in the process of building up solidarity among tribals who have been exploited over the years.

Mr. Sanjay Sanghvi, an activist of the Narmada Bachao Andolan arrived here along with a tribal, Govinda, with a view to gathering support for the seven year old campaign against the Sardar Sarovar project. Explaining the situation in Gujarat, Mr. Sanghvi, said more than 75000 tribals would become homeless and impoverished if the area is submerged as part of the mega project.



Adijyothis — moving towards unity

in economic life which was one of collective ownership and management. That's a national goal. But in reality our values are denigrated. In the process of "developing" us, they put on us the trappings which destroy us".

Nothing short of autonomy would give the tribal people the rights so long denied to them, Dr. Munda said. Wayanad, Coorg and Nilgiris, he said, was a contiguous tribal territory which had been parceled out to different states. All of them are backward, neglected districts. Yet they are a veritable gold mine for tea and coffee planters who profited enormously from the region but maintained a colonial attitude to the people and the land, he observed.

While criticizing the government's attempts to rehabilitate the tribals, he said several tribals had come back to their original homes due to the wretched life at the resettlement sites.

"No one will move out, the dam will be stopped," he said.

Mr. Sanghvi was confident of getting support for his cause from the tribals of South India. He sees the Silent Valley project as a milestone in policy planning for mega projects.

Allie Schwars, an anthropology student from California had come to collect material for her study on "Environmental and human rights issues in the Third World". She said there was a misconception about the tribals in developing countries. Na-

tional governments, mass media and international organisations like the United Nations should come forward to wipe out this misconception. She was of the opinion that the tribals should organize themselves for their rights like this.

An activist working for the welfare of tribals in Kodagu said the Sangamam provided the much needed interaction among the tribals of South India who are in a minority and emphasized the need for tribals organizing themselves to fight for their demands. She lamented that many Government programmes for the welfare of adivasis were going awry and the money intended for them being improperly utilized.

Narayanan, President of Solidarity, opined that the orderly yet informal conduct of the over 2000 Sangamam delegates for the week long Sangamam gives the lie to those who questioned the ability of the adivasis to organize and manage such a mammoth gathering. The spontaneity testifies to their total commitment and involvement, he said.

Another activist was pained that some of those who were instrumental in conscientization of the adivasis now felt threatened by the unity, self-reliance and decision making capabilities of the adivasis. This paternalistic notions of indispensability should be overcome, she said.

One animator who had worked for over a decade for rejuvenating the identity and self-assurance of the adivasis confessed to having mixed emotions on seeing the fruits of his labor. Not being recognized as 'Sir' the Sangamam volunteers, many of whom he had trained, refused to let him get food unless he produced his coupon and his 'support staff' badge.

Exposure

After the discussion there was a unique 'exposure' programme of interaction which was the highlight of the Sangamam. Tribal villages in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu played host to tribals from different regions. Maharashtrian tribals stayed with those in Gudalur, while

the Moolakurumbas of Kerala and Nilgiris went to Coorg.

Exhibition

An exhibition of arts, crafts and photographs was inaugurated by C M Yogi of Mananthavady and Kariyayya of Hunsoor, at Birsa Munda Nagar. Two Worli artists made greeting cards with traditional Worli motifs. In another stall, a wide range of herbs and medicinal plants were on display. An array of snares, traps and fishnets were also on show. Another interesting feature was the display and sale of oil paintings depicting different features of tribal life by Lincy from Bangalore. The expression of 'folk' life in

fact as the festival picked up momentum. CPM Wayanad district secretariat issued a statement saying the Sangamam was intended to sow the seeds of separatism among the tribals. It said the festival was aimed at isolating the tribals from the mainstream. It also accused the involvement of foreign hands.

The YuvaJanavedi has charged that the festival was a planned move by foreign hands to trigger separatist tendencies among tribals. The BJP sees shades of Nagaland type conversion exercises in the move. Posters condemning the festival had been put up all over Mananthavady town by detractors. The



Sangamam — a unique moment

'classical' medium and technique was novel and innovative.

There was a painting workshop facilitated by C F John from Bangalore, in which 18 Adivasi youth participated, which brought out the colorful and uninhibited expressions of folk art.

Not all Roses...

However, a shadow of controversy has fallen on the Sangamam with several organisations such as YuvaJanavedi and BJP coming out against it.

The protest against the Sangamam by these organisations had little ef-

fect as the festival picked up momentum. YuvaJanavedi also held a public meeting against it.

The controversies notwithstanding, one thing that emerges clearly from the Sangamam is that the tribals of South India, who are neither organized nor aggressive, are beginning to resent their exploitation in the plantations. Unless the government acts now, the tribal areas of South India may not remain peaceful for long.

Compiled and prepared from an article in Frontline and other materials from leading national dailies by Mathew Kokkat

RESOLUTIONS OF THE SANGAMAM

1. The Adivasi Culture and Identity should be sustained. For this the government, development agencies and the people at large should render support and help.
2. Tribal languages have to be fostered and they must be used as the medium for primary education in tribal areas.
3. The laws for the retrieval of the alienated lands of the tribals have to be enforced. In the states where no such laws exist, they have to be passed for immediate action. The widely happening encroachments and transactions of tribal lands must be stopped. The landless tribals must be provided with land to the extent of 1-2 hectares and the process must be completed within a period of 3 years.
4. The Forest laws have to be adequately amended so as to the protection of forests be entrusted with the tribals.
5. The eviction of tribals for the purpose of the implementation of mega-projects have to cease.
6. The Adivasis must have the right and freedom to gather forest produce and the existing forest laws must be amended accordingly.
7. Tribal Housing Schemes must be entrusted with the tribals and middlemen must be excluded. Also, they should have the opportunity to build their houses within the purview of their culture and social life.
8. Special Courts must be established to solve the tribal issues and atrocities against them.
9. Adivasi Social and Family orders of life have to be lawfully accepted and approved.
10. The planning and implementation of Tribal Development Programmes must be entrusted with the tribals.
11. All debts and liabilities of the tribals to the government and semi-government agencies have to be written off.
12. Separate ministries at state and national levels must be established for the purpose of the over-all development of the tribals.
13. Reservation of seats at Panchayath, District Councils, Legislatures and Parliament should be increased proportionate to the tribal populations at these levels.
14. Time-bound programme for the realisation of the primary needs of the tribals (land, housing, employment etc.) have to be planned and implemented.
15. Subsidy for subsistence food grains must be made available to all the adivasis in the country.
16. Creative measures have to be established for providing the tribals with employment in the government and public sector institutions. Educational and physical qualifications must not be criteria for this.
17. Educational facilities and privileges for tribals must be increased and made uniform at the national level.
18. Cheating the tribals of their privileges and rights with forged and cooked up records and certificates must be effectively prevented.
19. Teachers in tribal areas must be given refresher courses on adivasi culture and life. Only those who honor our life and culture must be appointed in such areas.

For realisation of the above needs, it is decided to approach the central and state governments and other development agencies. □

Adijyothi

The *Adijyothis* are symbolic torches of the hopes and aspirations of the tribal people. Adding to their symbolism were the places where they originated.

The *Adijyothi* which wound its way through the mountains and forests of Coorg and Mysore districts started from the land of the Jenu Kurubas and the Soligas, the scene of a 25-year battle with the Karnataka Government to retrieve tribal land given to an industrialist. The struggle, began in 1966, took on a more organised form under the banner of the Budakattu Krishikara Sangha in 1981. In

August 1990 the people won the battle.

The second *gyoti* began its journey from Lakkidi in Wayanad. This is the site of the legendary "Karinthandan Smarakam", a tree with a chain tied to it. The soul of Karinthandan, an adivasi killed by the British is believed to be chained there.

One torch started from Ponkuzhi, on the Kerala-Karnataka border. Myth has it that Sita resided in a pond here when Rama sent her out of the palace. Two Adivasis fed her and her children. When she disappeared, they built a temple in her honour. Later, non-tribal

migrants wrecked the temple in the belief that the Adivasis' strength came from it.

Doddasampige (the Great Champak) in the Biligiri Ranga Hills, Karnataka, was the origin of another. This is hallowed ground in the heart of the forest, revered by the Soliga people. The champak tree here is believed to be about 2,300 years old.

Another *gyothi* started from Edakkal in Kerala, the site of a number of engravings made by ancient Moolakurumbas. The engravings belong to the third century B.C.

Adapted from the press release prepared by the Sangamam doc. team

Cultural Interaction - Synthesis - Symbiosis

Promod John

There has been an increasing emphasis on the Cultural Rejuvenation of Indigenous peoples for their liberation and reclamation of their heritage. Though some propound the integrationist view and yet others a conservationist view it is, as always, in the synthesis of both that the way to liberation lies. Interaction with other societies and then enriching their cultural expression often results in both cultures becoming more vibrant and stimulating.

adivasi situation that it portrays, has had a checkered history. It is a street play that offers a part historical, part analytical look at adivasi history for the past two hundred years and then calls for a sustained effort to reclaim their heritage. Though the events portrayed are based in Wayanad, Kerala, it represents adivasi struggles all over the Globe. The issues highlighted, such as the exploiters remaining the same but assuming different garbs or the encroachment of their land and sub-

The Saga: The play starts in the present and uses the 'flash back' technique to give a historical and analytical perspective of the hunger of the adivasi. The changing modes of exploitation and serfdom are brought out forcefully by having the same actor play the roles of the feudal lord and Congress and Communist Politicians.

A voice cries out "Paikkintoo..." — "I am hungry." This cry brings the **Gadhikekkaran** who conducts the **Gadhika** who takes them back to the roots of the causes and genesis of their hunger. He evokes the racial memories which go back to the first decades of the 18th century. Their master is the feudal lord. Oppression is direct. The tools of oppression are religion and brute force.

The next stage is the arrival of the British. The adivasis are then used by the feudal lords, who collaborate with the British, to spy on the local Pazhassi King, and inform on his whereabouts. In return for this, the British also turn a blind eye to the oppression. The inflow of Migrants from Southern Kerala, from the then Travancore State, rattles the feudal lords. This fear is short-lived since they too establish a cordial working relationship, to the detriment of the adivasis, whose lands are freely given to the migrants.

With the advent of Independence the feudal lord, who first opposed the freedom struggle, becomes a Congressman. He is staunchly anti-Communist.

The imminent capture of power by the Communists, in 1957, prompts another change of color. The feudal lord who shouted **Vante Madaram** begins to shout **Inquilab Zindabad** — and continues the perennial oppression.

The adivasis were paid in kind, called the **balli** — most often paddy or rice. They were cheated by using a measure that was less than that used for others. In the famous **Balli** agitation, inspired by a trade-union worker Varghese at Thirunelli, they demanded that their wages be paid according to the standard measure. This struggle is also portrayed.

The play ends with a call for resistance to the forces of stagnation and the possibility of revitalizing their roots for a better future.

A Synthesis: **Nadugadhika** though performed in an 'alien' form expresses adivasi reality forcefully. It makes the observer confront reality as perceived by the adivasi. As all powerful forms of expression; it is the synthesis of two disparate cultures. This type of interaction between cultures, the vanguard of which should be those who are rooted in their own culture and can empathise with another in a spirit of openness, should be encouraged. It is an essential part of the networking of the oppressed, and an indivisible part of the struggle for



"Paikkintoo" a scene from **Nadugadhika**

Nadugadhika is one such interaction that has become a powerful force — powerful enough to rattle the omniscient state apparatus into banning it about a decade ago. It is a multifaceted cultural expression, being both an adivasi custom and the name of a saga on the adivasi life for the past couple of centuries.

The Ritual: The adivasis, as all animistic societies, believe in cleansing their environment and the person of spirits when either become abnormal. **Gadhika** is conducted by the **Adiyars** of Wayanad, in Kerala, to exorcise the 'evil spirits' spreading diseases. Once exorcised, the person is expected to become healthy again. There is an urgent need to thus exorcise the disease causing spirits from the **Nadu**, the land.

The Saga of the Play: **Nadugadhika** the Play is the effort of K J Baby, and was presented by the **Wayanad Manjumalai Makkal** at the Adivasi Sangamam. It, much like the

sequent legal dispossession, are common world over.

Highly potent and popular, it was performed close to 500 times in the early 1980s before it was banned by the government for being anti-national. It was last performed within the confines of the jail in which the artistes were held, on the request of the other inmates. Recently resurrected, its performance at **Sangamam** was one of its first since its revival.

Nadugadhika stirs memories and takes us from adivasi legends, pre-history and history up to the present. It implicitly asserts that the official history gives only part of the picture, and that a more holistic one needs to be made before we can come to grips with adivasi reality. The question asked during the course of the performance 'What is my crime, that I was born?' demands an answer.

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THE END OF LIVING AND THE BEGINNING OF SURVIVAL

In 1854, the "Great White Chief" in Washington made an offer for a large area of Indian land and promised a "reservation" for the Indian people. Chief Seattle's reply, published here in full, has been described as the most beautiful and profound statement on the environment ever made.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land?
The idea is strange to us.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

ALL SACRED

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people.

Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth for it is the mother of the red man.

We are part of the earth and it is part of us.

The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers.

The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man - all belong to the same family.

NOT EASY

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us. The Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves.

He will be our father and we will be his children. So we will consider your offer to buy our land.

But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us.

This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors.

If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is

sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people.

The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

KINDNESS

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes and feed our children. If we sell you land, you must remember and teach your children that the rivers are our brothers and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs.

The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on.

He leaves his father's grave behind and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children and he does not care.

His father's grave and his children's birthright are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads.

His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways.

The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.

There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring, or the rustle of an insect's wings. But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand.

The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whip-poorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and do not understand.

The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond, and the smell of the wind itself, cleaned by a midday rain, or scented with the pinon pine.

PRECIOUS

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath - the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath.

The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench.

But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports.

The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh.

And if we sell you land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

ONE CONDITION

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept I will make one condition: The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers.

I am a savage and I do not understand any other way.

I have seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train.

I am a savage and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of spirit.

For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.

THE ASHES

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of your grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin.

Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.

This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know.

All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life: he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Even the white man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny.

We may be brothers after all.

We shall see.

One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover our God is the same God.

You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white.

This earth is precious to Him and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator.

The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man.

That destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffaloes are all slaughtered, the wild horse are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires.

Where is the thicket? Gone

Where is the eagle? Gone

The end of living and the beginning of survival.



For A New Life Among Adivasis ...

Dr Ram Dayal Munda at the Sangamam*

Dr Ram Dayal Munda was welcomed to the Sangamam Colloquium by the vice-chairman of the organising committee, Mr G K Pushkar. Due to his hectic travel, he came a little late for the meeting.

Dr Munda expressed his happiness and joy to be in this historic event. He said that there were many occasions, many national level leaders and many fora, to organise such kinds of get-together or melas, but those trials were not successful. But here, in the south, the tribal groups and likeminded people have made a major breakthrough by organising this Sangamam. He said that this is the greatest evidence there is of solidarity among the groups. There is an urgent need to unite and build a common platform. This is a prerequisite to build a base for a tribal identity. Dr Munda said that he had come here with all the difficulties to hear the voices of the many groups who are gathered here. He continued saying that the agony and the tears shed by the tribals are echoing in the hills and mountains of the land.

Now-a-days, the tribal people are marginalised and alienated. The resources are controlled by the state, all the natural resources are taken away from the tribal community. The tribals themselves are feeling that they do not belong to the country and the country does not belong to them. Every action of government, government schemes and policies are made to suppress the identity of all tribals in India. The tribals feel that they are cornered and ignored in their own land. There are also differences among certain groups of tribals.

Politically the adivasi society was democratic. The present Indian political situation is capitalistic and undemocratic. It does not function as it was meant to. Each panchayat system has become a body of politics and authoritative. Panchayats do not fulfill the real meaning of democratic panchayat—the electoral system for instance, the

way it shows the majority and minority. It does not include the tribal sincerely. We do not see the participation of tribals. It is a strange phenomena during the elections. The results of the elections do not reflect the democratic process nor the will of the people. At the local level, when we elect the leaders, most of them are not from the tribals or locals.

The participation of the tribals in the decision making process is negligible thereby assuring that the benefits that are supposed to reach the tribals do not reach them. The democracy which was practiced by the tribal society has vanished. Naturalistic religion was practiced

Later on, it is possible that different religious practices may disappear.

Finally there is literature and arts. Every part of it is focused on the participation of our tribal community. At the national level they experience a kind of isolation. Hence they become individualistic and antagonistic. Tribals are expected to interact and to be integrated. The folk and the tribal art are disappearing fast. The tribal people are tempted to copy other forms of art and culture.

The most needed aspect of life is the political aspect. The tribals are looked down as children. They are considered not capable of manag-



Powerful Expression — Dr. Munda

by the tribals all over the world. Especially in India, the adivasi religion was practiced very sincerely. Dominant society however, does not value it, nor does it have acceptance as a distinct religion. The Hindu religion has dominated, distorted and debased our religion. When we think of future religion, it is going to be naturalistic as it was in the beginning as the tribals had. Tribal religions do not have a hierarchical framework. The present religion will be almost abandoned, and there may be *secular* religion.

ing themselves. Somehow the tribals are facing difficult times in functioning. The idea of coming together in such kind of meeting is to take better positions to identify and to plan for the future of tribals. The place where we are meeting now was once upon a time a great tribal land which was historical. The present situation is that the tribal population is decreasing and the non-tribal population is increasing. During the British time when we look at the map, there is major area of

tribal land only. The present situation is opposite to the past.

Major parts of north, central, south, east and west, tribal areas have been destroyed in a programmed manner in order to destabilize the

tribal society. I call upon the people to make a provision to have a meaningful autonomy of tribal area and its people. Those who consider the welfare and equality of the tribal people should come forward in this

regard. I only hope that this will bring new life among the tribals.

* Dr Ram Dayal Munda was the Vice Chancellor of Ranchi University and is the leading Ideologue of the Jharkhand Movement. Excerpts of the speech was provided by the Sangamam documentation team

Karinthandan, Talakkal Chandu and Birsa Munda

The three names are familiar to all those who came to the Adivasi Sangamam in Mananthavady, Wayanad, from October 12-19, 1992. What is less familiar, is the significance of the trio.

Karinthandan

'Karinthandan Smarakam' is a tree with a chain tied to it. Adivasi history has it that in the 17th century the British colonists, after having developed cash crop production in the Wayanad mountains, wanted to find a way to the port-town of Kozhikode, to transport their produce. Karinthandan, a Paniya cowherd, showed the way. He was subsequently shot dead by the British who wanted to project an image that it was they, and not Karinthandan, who found the path.

Later a group of bandits were known to be operating from this area who were using the Paniyas for their work. The big landlords called for the service of astrologers who said that the soul of Karinthandan was to blame. The soul was ritualistically tied to the tree with a chain. Paniyas believe that the soul of Karinthandan would break the bonds of the chain when the adivasis are free from bondage and oppression.

The venue of the Sangamam was Karinthandan Nagar. It is significant in many ways. The modern eco-fad and the conservation policies pursued by governments and agencies often take away the credit of the adivasis from the eco-friendly life-system that they have nurtured through the ages. In the

process we deprive them of their homes and throw them out, all in the name of conservation. Things have not changed since the days of the British when Karinthandan was killed to preserve their racial superiority. Now we kill the adivasis to hide our grossly exploitative, unsustainable lifestyles. The name is also a symbol of hope.

Talakkal Chandu

When the British came to India, the mainstream society collaborated with them. What should have been an absurdly easy struggle had to be a long drawn out one because of this fact. These collaborators did nothing to fight for liberation until they became directly affected — and many did not fight even at the end.

The adivasis however had better sense. Their struggles against the dominant society has been a ceaseless struggle. Prominent among their victories over the colonial forces has been their victory over the British in 1802. More than half a century before the first official war of Indian Independence, the adivasis of Wayanad under the leadership of Talakkal Chandu, in a successful campaign, captured the British fort at Panamaram, in Kerala.

The *Adijyothis*, torches symbolizing the resurgent adivasi identity, from seven different places of India, merged at this precise fort, as a tribute to this pioneer, who had the courage and vision to oppose colonial forces when the pillars of society were collaborating with them, selling the country while busy devising means as to

how best to exploit the situation for their benefit. It was also an affirmation of the determination to work towards unity.

Birsa Munda

Another fighter for liberation, this fearless adivasi was poisoned by the British at the young age of 25 for daring to question their legitimacy of rule. Even at school, he questioned the teachers as to their faulty perceptions and world view. Skilled in both dancing and playing the flute, he was a respected leader of his people, though young, and is one of the most popular leaders ever. It is a measure of his greatness that people themselves have mobilized to build a memorial in his honor.

The exhibition venue was named in his honor. It symbolizes the need for the youth to come to the forefront in the adivasi struggle for justice. It is also a tribute to this artiste who did not shirk from his duty of liberating his people.

The naming of the main venue after the mild mannered cowherd is to assert that the adivasis are willing to share with others the fruits of their support system and teach them the way to a sustainable future. The linking of Birsa Munda and Chandu, with the Sangamam, is to indicate that the struggle for liberation must be waged by the adivasis themselves. Though many are musically inclined, it is a pledge that they will do their duty towards their people.

Adapted from material prepared by the Sangamam documentation team

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

EMEHEL

Agriculture is the back-bone of Indian Economy. 80% of the Indian population live in villages and most of them involve themselves in agriculture. Food production is the major occupation in the rural economy. The five year plans recognized the need for raising food crops in this country.

Green Revolution was introduced in order to ward off hunger and destitution. The population was on the increase while the food stocks depleted constantly. In order to build up these depleting stocks and to raise the productivity of the land, (no doubt, due to the influence of the international financial institutions) India went for green revolution, with major irrigation facilities and import of hybrid seeds which naturally go along with fertilizers and pesticides. History has shown that these measures were futile compared to the ecological cost, health hazards etc. The calculation of cost benefit was taken just on the basis of input and output, but the factors like pollution of air and water, land degradation, toxic content in the crops, etc., were not taken into account at all. To say the least, there was no ecological and health audit of this new technology that was introduced in the country.

Another dimension of this is that the traditional methods of farming, the local seeds which were resistant to drought and pest, traditional methods of irrigation, water and land management and other such related issues, which were very well managed by the people themselves, and which were proved to be sustainable got lost in the process of modernization, chemicalisation and industrialization of agriculture.

As a result of all these, what we have today is an non-sustainable agriculture which requires high external input. It is in this context that we have to consider the options that are open before us towards sustainability and local management. The following are the indicators of sustainable agriculture (Source: Dover, M. and Talbot, L.M. "To Feed

the Earth: Agro-Ecology for Sustainable Development").

Ecological Indicators:

- Replenishment of soil nutrients removed by crops.
- Maintenance of the soil's physical structure.
- Constant or increasing levels of organic matter in the soil.
- No increase in soil acidity or toxicities.
- Minimum off-farm environmental contamination.
- Maintenance of habitat for pollinators, biological pest control agents and wildlife (the latter with the proviso that there is minimal build-up of weeds, pests and diseases)
- Conservation of genetic resources of crop and animal species formed; and farmers having equitable access to genetic material.
- A diversity of species farmed on a given site, and maximum useful nutrient and energy transfer between species.
- Continual cover of the soil by vegetation.
- High efficiency of water use, minimal evaporation from open water surfaces and sprays.
- The direction of technology change away from the use of non-renewable resources and subsidized energy, and towards the introduction of renewables, making more use of local resources and increasing photosynthetic efficiency

Social/Cultural Indicators:

- The farmer plays the leading role in designing the farm system and choosing technologies; and these designs and technologies build carefully on the precise site characteristics and on traditional husbandry techniques.
- Farming and pastoral communities thrive, but not at the expense of other communities (especially the urban poor).

- Non-agricultural employment is also available in agricultural areas.

Output Indicators:

- Yields are reliably constant or increasing.
- Agriculture is profitable enough to secure adequate subsistence and income for the farmer's family.
- Farmers' targets are to "optimize productivity on a long term basis" rather than to "maximize productivity now".

Economic Policy and

Institutional Indicators:

- Prevailing prices, grants and subsidies encourage farmers to maximize long-term productivity and resource conservation with security of supply as the main short-term goal - rather than to maximize short term productivity
- Extension, research, policies and procedures emphasize the farm system and not just individual commodities or enterprise; integrated advice is given to farmers.
- Policies, plans and targets do not emphasize solely output per unit area; farmer's net economic benefit and ecological sustainability are also goals.
- Regulations are in force to ensure that farming causes little off-farm environmental contamination.
- Land of the highest production potential is allocated to agriculture.
- Where agriculture produces regular surpluses, land is usefully retired to other productive uses.
- Financial assistance to farmers is not linked to specific commodities in a manner that discourages the best use of a region's ecological suitabilities.
- Rather than price of chemicals being subsidized, the opposite is the case: their price incorporates environmental costs; the "polluter pays" principle is applied. □

FEDINA NEWS CORNER**BANGALORE****Women staff meet:**

The women staff of FEDINA met for a second time at Bangalore office on November 2nd and 3rd as a follow-up of their earlier meeting. The following topics were taken up for discussion: are there opportunities available for the women staff within the organisation? What are the societal and biological limitations for taking up challenges?

The second part of the meeting was spent in discussions on Women and the Economy. When we think of women's programmes why do we always think of income generating schemes? What are the effects of income generating schemes on women? Is it an extra burden on the women? Finally it was concluded that even though income generating schemes are a burden, they are a necessity but there should be division of labour in the family.

Area coordinators' meet at Chengam:

The recent meeting of the area coordinators was held at Chengam, in the serenity and quietness of Jawadu Hills. The atmosphere was very conducive for serious reflection and discussion. Everyone felt quite enriched and refreshed after the Chengam meeting. Procedures within Fedina, role of the area coordinator, participatory culture, priorities and urgencies and the Year of the Indigenous People were some of the important issues that came up for discussion during the meeting.

SARJAPURA**An experiment:**

A new scheme has been introduced for the benefit of the women of Janthgondanahalli who depend on daily wages for their subsistence. They have formed a small group of their own and each of them are given a sum of Rs.100/- on every Monday. Every day an interest of 50

paise has to be paid. They utilise this amount for any income generating scheme of their choice. This capital amount should be returned on Saturday. The money can be taken again on the following Monday. The only restriction is that this money should not be used for buying alcohol or anything else that is harmful to health. This new venture is only an experiment at present and if this is proved a success, it will be implemented in other villages as well.

Health camp:

A three day health education camp was conducted for children of different villages in the month of October where 13 girls and 18 boys all studying in the 7th and 8th standards participated. The first day was spent on the importance of personal hygiene, cleanliness of the surroundings, importance of nutritious food and clean drinking water.

The second day stress was laid on prevention of diseases, their symptoms, first aid and related matters. Simple home remedies for illnesses like cold, fever, stomach ache, headaches etc. were taught. Cultural programmes and games also formed a part of this programme.

No smoking please:

No Tobacco Day was observed at Yamare on October 30th. The

programme was inaugurated by Dr. Bhavani from Kidwai Hospital. Dr. A Shekar from PHC Dommasandra and Dr. Vinayakumari from Kidwai hospital spoke on the ill-effects of tobacco and how to identify cancer.

H D KOTE**Cultural troupe in Bangalore:**

On November 7th, our cultural troupe from H.D. Kote visited Bangalore and took part in the Parisara Prajna Utsav during which they performed different types of kolatas and a street play. Their performance was very much appreciated by all who participated in the function.

Watershed programme extended:

The present programme of watershed development, which is progressing well in two tribal hadis, has much impact on other tribal hadis in the area as well. Due to the demand by the tribals, the programme has been extended to two more hadis Hunasekuppe A and B. Initial discussions with the people and the survey has been already done in this regard. It is planned to start the programme by next month. Approximately 96 acres of land will be covered under this programme which focuses mainly on conservation of soil and water.



Kolatta -- H D Kote troupe

Traditional tribal songs recorded:

The recording of some of the famous traditional tribal songs sung by tribal women was done recently. This was done during a three day programme arranged solely for the purpose. 16 songs have been recorded so far. This is the first time that traditional tribal songs were recorded at H.D. Kote.

WAYANAD

Bridging the gap

6th, 7th and 8th of August were important days for the leaders of people's organisation where Fedina has programmes. Their representatives met together at Wayanad on these days. They were from Sarjapura, H.D. Kote, Chengam, Nilgiris and Wayanad. The gathering comprised of seventy people. They shared their culture, customs, practices, life-situation and struggles. They were also given opportunity to visit tribal villages in Wayanad and Nilgiris. Coming back from the villages they evaluated the life-situation of tribals of these areas. They felt that the life of the tribals is the same everywhere no matter from which part of the country they come from. There are numerous similarities in their belief, culture, custom and practices. This finding and understanding was the outcome of this get together. They really enjoyed their being together. The cultural barriers were forgotten. The Paniyas and Naikas of Wayanad and Nilgiris joined hands with the Betta kurubas, Jenukurubas and Yeravas of H.D.Kote and the Karala Vellala Gowdas of Chengam. They lived three days together, singing, dancing and sharing their aspirations of life. Though FEDINA had provided several occasions for it's staff members to come together, it was for the first time that the representatives from our programme areas were given such an opportunity.

Adivasi Aikya Samithy reaches out:

The involvement of AAS in sorting out the various problems and implementing programmes for their fel-

low beings has been extended to many more colonies. The important expansions were in Bathery and Vaduvanchal areas. People are now convinced that if AAS interferes in solving their problems they settle them genuinely. They have the feeling that if they contact the AAS they will get justice. This confidence has made people to approach the AAS for various problems of their life. The constant visits to the colonies by the AAS leaders necessitated this expansion to more colonies. Now the Adivasi Aikya Samithy is actively involved in 60 tribal hamlets of Wayanad. The AAS has almost become the mouth piece, the independent and just voice of the tribals of Wayanad.



Education for working children

Illegal pregnancy at Vazhavatta:

Ms. Cheeru of Moorthikunnu center in the Vazhavatta area got pregnant from a neighbouring non-tribal. Having heard of the incident the AAS leaders contacted the accused. However, he was not ready to accept the truth and rejected the accusation. He went to Cheeru and threatened her saying that he will kill her if she continues to accuse him. He even asked her to have an abortion. But Cheeru refused.

The AAS had filed a case with the local police but no serious action was taken by the police. The accused had already politically influenced the police. A political leader who is one of the relatives of the accused contacted the AAS and

promised to settle the issue. He offered to give Rs.500/- to Cheeru. However, he put a condition that the AAS should never tell the public that this amount was given by him, rather they should tell that the cash is from the AAS fund. The AAS right away refused this proposal. Complaint was sent to the authorities including the Chief Minister of Kerala, demanding action on this matter.

Cheeru delivered a male child. Having neither father or mother or any close relatives, Cheeru is virtually an orphan. This situation has further added to her sufferings. Now the AAS is looking after her needs. It is decided to file a private com-

plaint in the court demanding justice.

The Adivasi Aikya Samithy conducted a protest march and public meeting at Vazhavatta in protest of the event. Both were well attended by the tribals of the area. There were more women than men in the march. The AAS leaders strongly condemned the atrocities against the tribals during the public meeting. This event has helped to convince the non-tribals that they cannot easily exploit the tribals any more.

False case against AAS leaders:

There is a good team of youth in the AAS of Vaduvanchal area. They

keep on going from hamlets to hamlets conducting meetings of AAS. Some politicians were not happy about this. They were not happy because these young people were going away from their clutches. Their attitude of questioning and challenging any unjust deeds further irritated others.

To stop this strengthening of AAS, some interested persons filed false cases against six AAS leaders of the area. They accused that these tribal youth stole their plantain, arecanut, ginger etc. The idea behind their traveling at night is for stealing, they complained. The AAS of the area conducted a jatha in protest against this false case. The idea of weakening AAS by such activities will go only in vain, they warned the public.

NILGIRIS

Adivasi Karshaka Samithy:

The Adivasi agricultural co-operative started in a minor way at Kottad eventually led to the formation of a new people's organisation - Nilgiris Adivasi Karshaka Samithy (NAKS). Earlier the co-operative was started with just 10 members. They started banana cultivation at Kottad in one acre of land. They planted 1000 plantain saplings. To discuss the progress of the cultivation this team used to meet regularly. Fortunately their plantain cultivation was a successful venture.

Simultaneously another group of youth had started yam cultivation at Chullimoola center. Some others too in different centres started vegetable cultivation and plantain cultivation in smaller way. We felt the need of bringing all these people together - those who are involved in such cultivation programmes. A number of meetings to this effect culminated in the formation of a forum of all those who are involved in agriculture. They have named this forum Nilgiris Adivasi Karshaka Samithy. Now more and more people are becoming members of NAKS. The formation of NAKS marked the beginning of a new people's organisation in Nilgiris.

Literacy Day:

The International Literacy day on September 8th was observed in Nilgiris in a festive atmosphere. In Nilgiris there are regular literacy programmes in 21 centres. The instructors were advised to complete a syllabus for adult literacy, prepared by FEDINA, before the Literacy Day; and they did it. Even before the Literacy Day, discussion classes were conducted in the centres on the importance of the Day.

On September 8th the people conducted a massive rally. There were public meetings and cultural programmes. Prior to these they

independence day procession which started from Ambalamoola and Kottad joined together at Pattavayal and they proceeded from Pattavayal to Bitherkad where the procession ended. At Bitherkad they had a public meeting at which important personalities from different walks of life spoke.

Cultural Troupe at Oxfam Mela:

It was an unique occasion for some of our tribal youth from Nilgiris to be at Bombay for few a days. At the invitation of OXFAM, a nine member team of tribal artists went to Bombay to stage cultural



Working for their future

had smaller jathas in villages promoting the message of literacy. The celebration has given a boost to the on-going adult literacy programme.

Independence Day:

August 15, the Independence Day of India, was celebrated in Nilgiris. The slogan of the celebration was 'Independence for Human Development'. The advent of the Day was an occasion for the animators to tell the people about the meaning of independence and its significance in our lives.

On Independence Day, as is customary for any such important days, the people conducted a rally. The

programmes at the OXFAM MELA organised to celebrate the 50th anniversary of OXFAM. The team was accompanied by two staff members. They staged a street drama based on tribal background, performed the traditional Paniya dance, played the music of Thudi and Cheenam which are their traditional musical instruments.

The trip turned out to be an memorable event for these tribal youth. There were 5 boys and 4 girls in the group. They had never been to a big metropolitan city like Bombay. Hence the happiness of these youth at this opportunity was only imaginable.

As the result of this trip a cultural troupe of tribal youth - the adivasi



Illiterate but not stupid

janakeeya kala sangham - has been formed and now there is a full pledged cultural troupe in Nilgiris.

KITTUR

Schools without teachers:

For the past three years the schools at Dindlakoppa and Sagara did not have any teachers though they were appointed by the government. These teachers managed to get their salaries regularly without attending the schools. Repeated efforts by the people to pressurize the government to look into the matter has finally proved successful. Since November two teachers have been coming regularly to the school. At Kalredaddi village, the people themselves have constructed a school building and have demanded the

Janashakti has now completed two years. Your views and constructive criticisms and suggestions are requested. This can cover the content, layout and design or any other relevant area.

The Editorial Team

government to appoint teachers. Now three villages of the Kulavalli cluster have teachers for their schools.

Water problem solved:

The people of Ningapur village have always been dependent on the neighboring lake and streams for water. The canals supplying the water from the lake has not been in good condition. For the past three years they have been putting pressure on the government demanding a borewell. Finally at the end of November the government yielded and a borewell was dug and to their great relief water was found at a depth of 240 feet.

Illiterate, but not stupid:

Money had been sanctioned to construct a temple under the Aradhana Scheme at Machi village. However, the Revenue Inspector, the village headman, the village accountant, a few harijan leaders and some other influential people somehow wanted to pocket the money. One day all of them gathered at the headman's house. The villagers were asked to come and give their signatures to start the building of the temple. But nobody responded to their appeal.

Finally a harijan leader went to call the members of his community. Yel-lava, who was grazing cattle at that time, clearly stated that she would not betray the village deity even if she was given a share of the money. She just would not sign and asked the leader to go away. The other villagers also would not give in to the wishes of these people. Now they have decided to join together and build the temple themselves.

CHENGAM

Afforestation:

As part of environment awareness we have planted variety of trees and other useful saplings in the Community Center campus. These saplings and tree cuttings were supplied by the forest department officials as token of their appreciation for our involvement in promoting environmental awareness among the tribal community.

Legal aid camp:

During the last week of September the Chengam team had the opportunity of hosting a legal aid camp for the benefit of the tribal population. The resource persons are practicing lawyers from the Magistrate and Taluk Courts. The lawyers have agreed to help in the follow up process of further trainings and camps in the near future. □

Material and photographs of the Adivasi Sangamam courtesy Ms C K Janu, Chairwoman, Adivasi Sangamam Organizing Committee and Parvathy, Chairwoman, Sangamam Documentation Committee.

JANASHAKTI is the official newsletter of the Foundation for Educational Innovations in Asia (FEDINA) 902, Indiranagar, 1 stage, Bangalore 560 038. Published in English, Kannada and Malayalam by Mahesh H Lobo, Coordinator, FEDINA.

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PRINTED AT: WQ Judge Press, Residency Road, Bangalore 560 025