**Impressions of Prashanthi**

The yatra gives all of us so many learnings and transformative experiences. For me - it taught me many new things about myself. We sit in the mud, we walk towards our learnings, we sleep on the floor and share our space. All of these things taught me humility and that I need very little to lead my life. I actually carried a sling bag on the first day with things I thought I absolutely can't do without - my water bottle, my sanitizer, notebook, money and what not. It seems so funny now but after a few hours of walking it all seemed so heavy that I decided I need none of these things. Metaphorically- perhaps when you set out on great journeys in life it is best to keep your baggage to the minimum.

Respect for all people is something I learnt at Palle Srujana and it has been reinforced again and again in me this yatra and my journey at Palle Srujana. I always used to think about villages as underprivileged, poor and needing help. But Shodha Yatra taught me that villages are rich with knowledge, nature, and enterprising, brilliant innovative people. Perhaps all of us from the cities need to go to villages and learn - how to live in harmony with nature, what it means to work hard, a strong sense of community and how to treat people with warmth and compassion.

Shodha yatra is a journey through an unknown place with an unknown agenda. We just walk and talk to the people we meet on the way, we learn from nature and what we see, co yatris and our reflections. The walk itself taught me that I can do much beyond what I accepted as my physical limitations. Conversations with Brigadier Ganesham have helped me unlearn a lot of assumptions, perspectives I had about villages and about everything in general. Another co yatri Anji Reddy garu has taught us so much about the plants we found on the way, housing, agriculture and life in the village. The yatra brings together a very diverse group of people of all ages, genders, backgrounds and walks of life. And we all are equal, we walk together and learn together. We probably would not get to know each other like this if we had met each other in the outside world.

In this yatra we met potters, farmers, people who make cement moulds. They taught us about their work and we got the opportunity to understand the hard work goes behind all the small goods and services we take for granted in life. I especially am so touched by the old people we met. The grace they had and the full life they have led- the hard work, the ups and downs, the children they raised and the pains they endured - we were lucky to hear them share it and to have felicitated them and given them a moment of respect and happiness they deserve. Listening to them speaks about their youth also made me realize how far the world has come, how much life has changed. Is it for better or for worse is a question I am still pondering on though. I also loved spending time with children. The Ignite session that Brigadier had conducted and the ideas that children came up with left me so inspired. Children caught onto the process of identifying pain points and innovating solutions so well. They came up with so many brilliant ideas that left me so hopeful about the future.

All in all, the yatra was a memorable experience for me and was filled with learnings. It has enriched me as a person and I am so happy I had the chance to be a part of it !

Affectionately,

Prashanti.