

FAQs of Chinna Shodhyatra (From the experiences of the 52nd CSY)

The **52nd Chinna Shodhyatra, held from April 11–13, 2025**, was a unique journey through the villages of Laxmipuram to Vinagadapa of Andhra PradeshTelangana. Organized by Palle Srujana, this yatra wasn't just a walk — it was a moving classroom across fields, canals, and communities rich in knowledge and resilience. It offered a powerful opportunity to learn from villagers, observe biodiversity, and engage with grassroots innovators.

Instead of writing a conventional reflection, I've chosen to present my impressions in the form of an FAQ — the kind of questions one might ask before or after experiencing such a journey.

1. Why did you join the 52nd CSY?

Well, as an agriculture student, rural spaces are technically my “workspace,” and farmers? They're my future clients. But let's be real — today's education system often leaves a massive gap between theory and real-world realities.

I graduated with a degree. But I wanted to *understand* the people I'd eventually work with. I needed to walk the land, hear the stories, see the struggles firsthand.

Was I successful?

Hell Yah!!

2. Principle of Chinna Shodhyatra

We knew right from the start — this yatra wasn't going to be a walk in the park (literally). It demanded intense walking, yes, but it was never *just* about covering miles. We were introduced to the true spirit of the journey through a brilliant acronym: **W.A.L.K.**

Witness – Be present, observe, soak in the world around you.

Acept – Embrace the different, the unfamiliar, the raw.

Listen to Learn – Not to reply, not to argue. Just listen.

Knowledge – Let each step teach you something new.

3. What kind of people came for this?

All kinds — and that's what makes it amazing.

From little champs aged 8 or 10, all the way up to graceful 75-year-olds. The energy core? Definitely the college students — they kept things lively, loud, and full of laughs. But the vibe was perfectly balanced by folks from IT, HR, and teaching backgrounds who brought a certain calm and wisdom into the mix.

4. Key activities of 52nd Chinna Shodhyatra

Day one kicked off with introductions — and wow, what a mix of people! Sharing backgrounds and expectations set the tone beautifully.

Over the next three days, we were fully immersed in:

- Learning about plant species we usually overlook — every leaf had a story.
- Understanding rural farming practices and the challenges that don't make it to textbooks
- Heart-to-heart convos with 85+ year-olds who had *seen it all*.
- Stories of grassroots innovators — the real MVPs turning problems into solutions with minimal resources.
- Showcasing grassroots technologies to villagers.
- Igniting ideas and curiosity at local schools.
- Discussions on concurrent topics

5. What was the best part?

You know how group activities usually start off strong and then slowly fizzle into just fun and games?

Not here. This yatra struck the perfect balance — a disciplined flow with just the right dose of flexibility. That's probably why it's stood the test of time — 52 yatras and still going strong. You could feel the purpose in the air... and that's what made it special.

6. What was the difficult part?

You'd think the biggest challenge would be the long walks, right? But honestly, the real struggle? Deciding *who* to walk with!

With Brigadier Ganesham leading from the front and Anji Reddy sir bringing up the rear — both sharing stories, insights, and sparking great conversations — it felt like choosing between two amazing playlists.

7. How were the interactions with the villagers?

From the moment we started walking, the curiosity was real. People would pause whatever they were doing, give us that "*what's going on here?*" look, and a few even came up to chat. Of course, we *might* have interrupted a couple of peaceful routines too, but the exchanges were always warm.

An elderly man pointed out how our generation hops on motorbikes for even the shortest distance, while his generation walked for miles — and as he put it, that's what kept them healthier. We also got little insight into their food habits — like how maize and bajra used to be staples, but now everyone's chasing the "white of the white" rice. And then there were reflections on how joint families, once their core strength, are slowly fading away.

8. Is this safe for women?

A big *yes*. Always has been.

There's usually solid participation from women and girls. And even this time — when I was the *only* woman on the yatra — I never felt out of place. I was looked out for, my comfort and safety were always prioritized, and I felt totally seen and respected. So if that's holding you back? Don't let it. You're good.

9. What about food?

Ah yes, the million-dollar question!!

I still remember Brigadier Sir on Day 1 saying, "*Don't worry, we'll make sure you get good food. Can't promise a fixed time, but food will be served.*"

And he *meant it*. After long, soul-refreshing walks, sitting under mango orchards, by big old roadside trees, or in a school compound — that plate of food tasted *divine*. It wasn't just a meal, it was a whole vibe. Nature + food + tired-but-happy feet = perfection.

10. Why should one participate?

Because it's not just a walk — it's a walk *with purpose*. You'll meet people from totally different walks of life, and yet, there'll be this strange, beautiful alignment. Everyone's there because they care — about doing better, about being part of something meaningful. It's not just a yatra, it's a little community of curious, kind, driven souls.

11. What was the take-home message for me?

Honestly, it pushed my limits in ways I didn't expect. It reminded me just how incredibly adaptable we are when we step outside our comfort zones.

And the grassroots innovators? Wow. These are people who spot a problem, roll up their sleeves, and start building solutions with whatever they have around them. No labs, no fancy setups — just pure jugaad, relentless experiments, and the kind of perseverance that should be in textbooks.

In a world where everything's instant and everyone's chasing quick validation, these stories are a powerful reminder: *believe in what you're doing, keep showing up, and trust the process*. That's the real skill we need today.

12. Any advice for someone planning to join a future Shodhyatra?

Here's the deal — there'll always be a million reasons *not* to go. A work deadline, a family event, a "maybe next time" voice in your head. But trust me, this is one of those experiences that's best lived *now*, not postponed. The sooner you do it, the better.

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