

My Impressions of the 58th Chinna Shodha Yatra

Three Days That Changed the Way I See Villages, People and Happiness



The 58th Chinna Shodha Yatra was my first Chinna Shodha Yatra. Before going, I honestly thought of it mainly as a village outreach programme.

I came to know about the Yatra through my faculty and, as I started watching videos about previous Shodha Yatras on YouTube, I got an idea of what we were going to do. I thought we would go to villages for three days, interact with villagers, identify their problems, collect problem statements and then come back to our college and try to solve those problems through technology, innovation and entrepreneurship.

As the President of the E-Cell, I started planning the Yatra from that perspective. I wanted everything to be peaceful, safe and properly organised. I even prepared checklists based on the different areas we wanted to observe during the Yatra.



At the same time, I had many assumptions about village life. Since I have mostly lived in the city, I imagined that villages might have fewer facilities, basic accommodation and food that I might not enjoy. I was mentally preparing myself to adjust for three days.

But once the Yatra actually started, many of my assumptions changed.

The First Day – Entering a Different World

One of our first experiences was visiting a school and interacting with the children. It was my first time personally going into a village school and spending time with students in this way.

I really enjoyed it.

The children were very energetic and happy to interact with us. We spoke with them, encouraged them and listened to their ideas. I realised that sometimes children only need someone who is willing to listen to them.



After leaving the school, we started walking through the villages and the actual Shodha Yatra began.

From that point, I started taking photographs and videos of almost everything.

Initially, I wanted to document the entire Yatra because some of my friends and students could not come with us. I thought that if I captured everything, I could show them what we experienced after returning to college.

So, throughout the three days, I was often behind the camera.

Looking back, I feel that this was both a good thing and a limitation. I have many memories captured through photos and videos, but because I was concentrating so much on documentation, I could not interact deeply with as many villagers and co-Yatris as I wanted.

That is one thing I definitely want to change in my next Yatra.

The Hospitality of the Villagers

The biggest impression I will carry from this Yatra is the hospitality of the villagers.

Wherever we went, people welcomed us with so much warmth. They would ask whether we needed water, food or tea. They treated us almost like their own family.

One small incident especially stayed with me.

On the second morning, we were looking for a place where we could get hot water. It was very cold, and we were trying to find somewhere to freshen up.

We asked around the village, but there was no geyser or such facility.



Then one young boy came to us and asked what we needed. When we explained that we were looking for hot water, he told us that people in the village usually bathed with cold water.

But he did not simply leave it there.

He took me and my friends several hundred metres to another place where we could get warm water.

He did not know who I was.

He did not know where I came from.

He simply wanted to help.

That small incident touched me a lot.

It made me realise that hospitality is not about how much we have. It is about how willing we are to share what we have.

My Assumptions About Food Were Completely Wrong

Before going to the Yatra, I had also thought that the food and accommodation might be difficult because we were staying in villages.

But I was completely wrong.

The food arranged throughout the three days was excellent and genuinely delicious. I never expected the food to be that good.



I am really thankful to Muniraju Sir and the entire team for taking such good care of us.

This was another small lesson for me: sometimes we create opinions about something without actually experiencing it.

The Yatra gave me the opportunity to experience it for myself.

Meeting People From Different Backgrounds

Another thing I really liked about the Yatra was the people.

There were students, school students, working professionals, company founders, innovators and people from different backgrounds.

What I liked most was that nobody behaved differently because of their profession or position.

There was no feeling of:

“I am a working professional, how can I talk to a student?”

Everyone spoke normally.

Everyone helped everyone.

Everyone was simply a Yatri.

I really liked that feeling.

There was no discrimination based on gender, profession or background. There was a feeling that **we are all one team**.



I could not interact with everyone as much as I wanted because of my documentation work, but the people I did speak with gave me many new perspectives.

Learning From the Villagers

During the Yatra, I met many villagers who were 70, 80 and even around 90 years old.

What surprised me was that they were still active and doing their daily work.

One elderly person who was around 90 years old particularly impressed me. He was still doing his own work and field activities and living happily with his family.



In cities, we have many facilities and resources. But when we look at older people in cities, it is not always common to see people in their 70s, 80s or 90s continuing the same kind of physical work.

Seeing this made me think differently about strength, lifestyle and happiness.

I also met younger people who had studied in cities and still had ideas and ambitions connected with their future and entrepreneurship.

That showed me that village life is not simply about tradition. There are also young people with dreams, ideas and ambitions.

What Changed in My Thinking

Before the Yatra, I used to think that villages mainly had fewer resources and fewer facilities compared to cities.

After spending three days there, I started looking at it differently.

Yes, villages may have fewer facilities in some ways.

But I noticed something that we often forget in cities.

People can be happy with what they have.

They do not always compare their lives with others.

They do not constantly think about what they are missing.

They work with what they have, live with their families, help each other and continue their lives peacefully.



That made me think about our city lives.

We have more technology.

We have more facilities.

We have more comfort.

But having more does not automatically mean being happier.

The Yatra made me understand that having fewer material resources does not necessarily mean having less happiness.

The Silent Moon Walk

One of the experiences I will remember for a long time was the silent moon walk.

Walking at night with the other Yatris, under the moonlight, was a completely different experience for me.



For some time, we forgot about phones, schedules and our normal routines.

We were simply walking and observing nature.

It was peaceful.

At the beginning of the Yatra, I was mainly thinking about problem statements.

But during moments like this, I realised that the Yatra was giving us something more than problem statements.

It was giving us experiences.

From Problem Statements to People

When I came to the Yatra, my main objective was to identify problems that villagers were facing and think about how our E-Cell could eventually work on them.

But after experiencing the Yatra, I understood that a problem statement is not just something written on paper.

Behind every problem, there is a person.

Behind every problem, there is a story.

Before thinking about technology or a solution, we have to listen to the people who are actually experiencing the problem.

That is one of the biggest lessons I am taking back to my E-Cell.

What I Would Do Differently Next Time

There is one thing I would definitely change if I attend the next Yatra.

I would spend more time communicating with villagers and fellow Yatris.

This time, I spent a lot of my time taking photographs and videos because I wanted to document everything.

Next time, I want to keep the camera aside sometimes.

I want to talk more.

I want to listen more.

I want to understand people more deeply.

This time, I tried to capture the Yatra.

Next time, I want to experience it even more.

My Biggest Takeaway

The biggest learning I am carrying from this Yatra is about **nature, people, hospitality and happiness**.

The villagers may not have everything that we have in cities, but many of them seemed happy with what they had. They did not constantly complain about what they lacked or compare themselves with others.

They taught me that happiness is not always about having more.

Sometimes, happiness is simply being grateful for what we already have.



The 58th Chinna Shodha Yatra was supposed to be a three-day village outreach programme for me.

But it became much more than that.

I went there thinking about problem statements.

I came back thinking about people.

I went there expecting limited facilities.

I came back appreciating simplicity.

I went there planning to complete three days.

By the end, I was wishing that we had another three or four days.

And now, instead of thinking about how the Yatra ended, I am already waiting for the next one.

I definitely want to attend another Chinna Shodha Yatra, and I would love to encourage my friends and students from other colleges to experience it too.

Thank you, Palle Srujana, all the organisers, volunteers, villagers and fellow Yatris for giving me an experience that I will remember for a very long time.

— Harsha Sampangi

Student of Malla Reddy Deemed to be University

