

I don't know yet!

I realised after every CSY that this is my answer. I end up coming home with too many questions and more confused than I ever was.

This time, I went to Chinna Shodha Yatra for solely two things: **purugulu (insects) and pillalu (kids)**.

I saw 23 insects over those 3-4 days. I still don't know the names of all of them. So that is one thing I want to learn next. I want to actually learn what I was looking at instead of just knowing that "I saw an insect."

And then there were children. I spoke to many of them. Kids from the villages, children from the schools, and the kids who came along with us too, Nivedh, Pranav and Chitraksh.

Somehow, with children, I felt I had to become zero.

And maybe that is what CSY is really about.

Becoming Zero

Thathagaru (Brig. Ganesham garu) keeps talking about unlearning and relearning.

But I think we sometimes understand "unlearning" as simply changing what we know. For me, this time it felt more like **becoming zero on the matter**.

Not going in thinking I already know why something is happening.

Not assuming I know what a person is feeling.

Not assuming that because something looks a certain way to me, it must actually be that way.

Children did this to me quite a lot.

They would say something very simply, and then I would sit with it for a while. Honestly, I'm still sitting with those questions today.

Sometimes I felt children saw something I didn't see in adults, maybe because they haven't yet learnt to filter everything through what is "supposed" to be true.

The little things

Some of the things I remember most are actually very small.

For the first time, I woke up to the sound of a rooster.

I even recorded it.

I was thinking, okay, this can become my alarm from now. Why am I scrolling for an alarm tone when this is already available?

We had also been waiting for what food we'd be eating this time since the previous day. And when it finally came, it was very good.

Nothing huge happened. But these are the things I remember.

Maybe because when we are constantly moving around in cities, we don't even notice what is happening around us.

What do we teach children to aspire to?

At the school, I spoke to seventh-grade children.

Some wanted to become IAS officers. Some wanted to become IPS officers. Some had no idea yet.

Their families were doing all kinds of work. Agriculture, weaving, daily wage work and other things.

But something surprised me.

Some of the children didn't really know what their own family members did.

One boy said his grandfather farms. But he had never really learnt farming from him.

Another child said they don't go near their family members when they are working because they don't like it.

And I kept thinking about this.

If we don't feel proud of the work we do ourselves, how are children going to learn to value that work?

We keep telling children to become IAS, IPS, doctors, engineers.

But who is telling them that farming is also something worth understanding?

Who is telling them that weaving is knowledge?

Who is telling them that knowing how food reaches our plate is also knowledge?

I don't know.

I am still thinking about it.

There was also one boy who wanted to become an IAS officer. He saw one of the *Palle Srujana* magazines and asked,

“Akka, can I take this magazine? I’ll take it home. It will be useful when I go to the village.”

That stayed with me.

We usually think of these magazines and this kind of knowledge as something useful for adults. But maybe schoolchildren also need access to it.

Maybe even more than we think.

Our children’s dreams are not always only their own

One morning, a few younger children, mostly 2nd, 3rd and 4th class, came while we were having breakfast.

I asked them what they wanted to become.

A few said teacher. One said Doctor.

But then something came up in the conversation.

Some of them said they wanted to become these things because **those were their mothers’ dreams**.

Not “I want to become my mother.”

Their mothers had dreams. And somehow those dreams were now becoming the children’s dreams too.

That made me think.

How much of what we call a child's dream actually belongs only to the child?

Maybe children carry things from their parents without even realising it.

And maybe some children are carrying unfinished dreams too.

Later, these same children were talking about how they had learnt to make tomato rice.

And I found that funny in a good way.

We give so much importance to “doctor,” “teacher,” “IAS”, and all these big aspirations.

But knowing how to make tomato rice is also something they learnt.

Why do we decide that one kind of knowledge is important and another is not?

Maybe both can exist together.

Education, marriage and independence

I met a 26-year-old woman who had completed her B.Com till second year.

She was married.

At the time of marriage, she was told that she could continue studying and work if she wanted to.

Later, her husband did not agree to her working.

She likes drawing. She also knows stitching.

I don't know whether she is unhappy with her life. I don't want to make that assumption.

But I kept thinking about something else.

What exactly do we mean when we say a woman is independent or is developing?

If she can study or work only when someone else agrees, what does that independence really mean?

I don't have a neat answer to this.

But I think I need to question what I myself understand by independence and development.

Who gets to decide?

There were many such moments where I caught myself making assumptions.

For example, some women did not know the current tomato market price because their husbands handled the market.

The women and children didn't usually go to the market.

Initially, I thought, why doesn't everyone in the family know the market price?

Then I stopped.

Why am I deciding what everyone *should* know?

We often say farmers should remove middlemen and sell directly.

But why should the farmer have to do everything?

If a middleman is filling a role, then why don't we become the middlemen?

Instead of simply saying, "Farmers should eliminate them," maybe we should ask whether there is a way for us to fill that gap fairly.

Again, I don't know what the answer is.

But I think the question is more interesting than the assumption I started with.

Authority

This one came from a child.

I was talking to one of the children who came with us about animals.

And he simply said,

"Authority, akka."

That word stayed with me.

We have somehow decided that humans have authority over animals.

Maybe because we think we are more intelligent.

Maybe because we think we are superior.

But who gave us that authority?

I didn't come up with this thought. The child just said one word, and it made me think about the whole thing differently.

How many things do we assume are ours simply because we have decided we are above something else?

The village I thought I knew

There was a house at the edge of a village.

It was a beautiful house, with animals around, land around it, and so much space.

Very peaceful. Very scenic.

The kind of place that city people would probably look at and say, "I want this life." and we said the same too!

I met Usharani garu there.

She had done a BA in Literature. She wanted to do an MBA and get a job, but circumstances didn't allow it.

She seemed happy and content with what she had.

But she also said something that stayed with me.

She said she was happy when someone came and spoke to her.

That made me look at the village differently.

We talk about migration mostly in terms of jobs, money and education.

People leave villages because there are better opportunities in cities.

Of course.

But what happens to the people who stay?

What happens when the village becomes quieter because everyone has left?

Maybe there is a kind of loneliness that doesn't show up in economic reports.

A house can be beautiful.

There can be land, animals, peace.

And still, someone can be waiting for another person to come and talk to them.

Samvedana and innovation

Thathagaru has always said that samvedana is a basic human quality.

And that innovation comes from samvedana.

For me, this time, I started thinking about what kinds of problems we actually innovate for.

A lot of innovation seems to solve physical problems.

We build something faster.

Something easier.

Something cheaper.

Something more convenient.

But what about mental and emotional problems?

For example, the loneliness that can happen in villages when people leave for cities.

Who is innovating for that?

Are we even talking to each other enough to understand that problem?

And when someone talks to us, are we actually listening?

Or are we already preparing our answer while they are still speaking?

What is samvedana really?

Not as a word.

But as something we actually practice.

I think I need to understand that better.

Knowledge is meaningless

This thought has been coming back to me again and again.

Knowledge is meaningless.

Not because knowledge is useless.

But because just knowing something doesn't really mean much if we don't understand it, observe it, question it or do something with it.

I saw 23 insects.

I can say I saw 23 insects.

But if I don't know what they are, what they do, why they are there, what they eat, what eats them, then what exactly did I learn?

Maybe I only collected information.

The same thing happens with people.

We can know facts about someone's life and still not understand them.

Maybe knowledge needs something more.

Patriarchy and the idea of “help”

One man spoke about how his wife has always been in the kitchen.

If she is unwell, the daughter-in-law cooks.

If the daughter-in-law can't, then somehow they manage.

The son doesn't enter the kitchen because he works outside.

And I kept thinking about this word we use so casually.

“Help.”

When a man cooks at home, we say he is helping his wife.

Why is it help?

If it is a home, **isn't the work required to run that home everyone's work? Inti pani ante intlo andari pani ani kada?**

Why does the responsibility belong to one person by default?

We are still much further behind than we think.

Sometimes we think patriarchy is only about very obvious things.

But it is also in these small everyday assumptions.

Who cooks.

Who cleans.

Who earns.

Who gets to decide.

Who is “helping” whom.

What do villagers have that we don't?

During the Yatra, I heard this quite a few times.

Villagers are kinder.

Villagers are more genuine.

Villagers have more empathy.

City people have lost all of this.

I don't know if I agree with that.

I don't want to romanticise villages just because I saw some beautiful things there.

There are restrictions.

There is patriarchy.

There is a lack of opportunity.

There is loneliness.

There are things that are difficult too.

But I did notice something.

Contentment.

People seemed to be satisfied with what they had in a way that I don't always see around me in the city.

In the city, the list keeps growing.

A better phone.

A better job.

A better house.

More money.

More experiences.

More everything.

And maybe wanting more isn't wrong.

But where does enough come from?

I don't know if villagers are actually more empathetic or more genuine than city people.

Maybe they are.

Maybe they aren't.

But if there is a difference, I want to understand where it comes from.

What I want to find out next

I have this habit of choosing one activity or hobby every month and spending some time on it.

For next month, I think I know what I want to investigate.

I want to talk to people around me.

People on the roads.

People at home.

People I meet in everyday life.

Because I keep hearing that village people are kinder, more genuine, more empathetic and that city people are quite the opposite.

But is that actually true?

And if it is true, **why?**

Is it because of the environment?

The way people live?

The amount of interaction they have with others?

The kind of responsibilities they grow up with?

Or is it just something we have started believing about villages?

I don't want to assume either way.

I want to find out.

A question worth pursuing. And thanks to this CSY, I don't have worry about what to do next month.

-Srivalli Eduri