

G. Pulla Reddy Engineering College (Autonomous): Kurnool

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My Reflections on the 57th Chinna Shodha Yatra

A Journey that Changed My Perspective on Innovation, Education and Life

Respected Brigadier P. Ganesham Sir, Namaskaram.

My heartfelt gratitude for giving me the opportunity to participate in the 57th Chinna Shodha Yatra. I joined this Yatra expecting to see grassroots innovations. I returned carrying something much more valuable—a new way of thinking. Initially, I thought innovation belonged to laboratories, research centres, startups, and engineers. During these three days, I realized that innovation is born wherever a person observes a problem and dares to solve it. The Yatra helped me understand that every village is a living laboratory, every farmer is a researcher, every artisan is a designer, and every common citizen has the potential to become an innovator.

Palle Srujana – A National Movement

To me, Palle Srujana is not merely an organization.

- It is a movement that restores dignity to rural knowledge.
- It discovers hidden innovators.
- It documents their ideas.
- It encourages them.
- It connects deserving innovations to platforms like the National Innovation Foundation, ensuring that rural creativity receives the recognition it deserves.

More importantly, Palle Srujana restores confidence among rural innovators by telling them: "Your ideas matter."

I believe this message is more powerful than any award.

Walking with a Leader

One of the greatest lessons I learned came not from words, but from observation. Throughout the Yatra, during the evenings volunteers repeatedly

requested you to travel by bike or car. Yet you chose to walk with the yatries. That single decision taught me that leadership is not about staying ahead of people. Leadership is about walking beside them. Although you have served India in the Army, I now feel you continue serving the nation in another uniform—the uniform of humility and service. Earlier, you protected India's geographical borders. Today, you are expanding the boundaries of grassroots innovation by building an Innovation Volunteer Army.

Stories beneath Trees

One of my favourite moments during the Yatra was when, after walking some distance, everyone gathered beneath a tree. Those moments became open classrooms. Every story you narrated about grassroots innovators reminded us that innovation begins with observation, empathy, and persistence—not with expensive technology. Those stories were perhaps the best innovation lessons/sessions I have ever attended.

Reflection Sessions

Every evening before dinner, every participant shared the impressions of the day. Initially I thought it was simply a sharing session. Later I realized it served a much deeper purpose.

- It encouraged observation.
- It improved listening.
- It allowed every participant to learn from everyone else's perspective.

Even though we walked together, every person discovered something unique. Those reflection sessions transformed individual experiences into collective learning.

Four Gurus

The Yatra introduced us to three Gurus.

Nature.

Villagers.

Co-Yatris.

While reflecting after returning home, I discovered a Fourth Guru.

Myself.

Every conversation questioned my assumptions. Every observation transformed my thinking. Every experience helped me discover strengths and responsibilities I had never recognized

before. Perhaps every Yatri eventually meets this Fourth Guru.

Sangham Radio

Visiting Sangham Radio left a lasting impression on me. Seeing women confidently managing a community radio station which was constructed innovatively and serving villages through information, awareness and education reminded me that innovation is not always a machine. Sometimes innovation is giving people a voice. One of the most fascinating aspects was their ability to preserve history through songs. Without any written script or preparation, they spontaneously sang, recited, and recalled events, passing stories from one generation to the next through music.

Pichuka Gullu School

As a teacher, the visit to Pichuka Gullu School deeply inspired me.

- Students were grouped according to learning levels rather than age.
- Practical skills received equal importance alongside academics.
- Children discovered their strengths through experience.

It made me question how engineering education can become more experiential.

One of the most inspiring learnings for me was the unique education model, where children spent six months mastering a practical skill before moving on to another. Such an approach not only develops skills but also nurtures confidence, curiosity, and real-life problem-solving abilities. Building knowledgeable individuals through hands-on learning is truly remarkable.

It saddened me to learn that this wonderful school is no longer functioning. I sincerely request you, Sir, to explore the possibility of reviving such schools or similar learning centers in the future. If such an initiative is undertaken, I would be honored to be a part of it and contribute in any way I can.

Similarly, during our visit to Sangham Radio, we discussed the idea of documenting and preserving the beautiful folk songs of the Sangham women. I would be delighted to volunteer for this effort as well, with your guidance and approval. I believe preserving these songs will help safeguard a valuable part of our rural cultural heritage for future generations.

Nature as Teacher

Walking with Anji Reddy Garu was another memorable experience.

Every tree...

Every leaf...

Every plant carried a story.

Many participants even tasted medicinal leaves.

Nature itself became our classroom. One of the experiences during the Yatra was knowing *Garika Chutney*, tried it - a traditional preparation that reflected the richness of local knowledge. I also learned about the medicinal uses of the *Mahabira* plant and have tried this traditional remedy for my mother-in-law's leg pain. Thank you, Sir, for introducing us to these valuable traditional practices and reminding us that our villages are rich repositories of knowledge and wisdom.

Grassroots Innovators : Meeting the Real Heroes of Innovation

Meeting innovators like Praveen Garu, whose Mulberry Plant Cutter received recognition from the National Innovation Foundation, along with Pandu Garu and Siva Garu, reminded me that true innovation is born out of necessity, observation, and perseverance rather than luxury.

- Praveen Garu's innovation addressed a real challenge faced by mulberry farmers and demonstrated how a simple idea can make a significant impact.
- Siva Garu's thoughtful innovation simplified the traditional Netha Pattu Saree Maggam (handloom weaving) process, reducing the effort required by weavers while preserving their craft. It showed how innovation can protect our heritage while improving livelihoods.
- Pandu Garu's creative approach of converting discarded plastic into useful products highlighted the importance of sustainable innovation. He transformed waste into value, proving that innovation can also contribute to environmental conservation.
- Although I did not have the opportunity to meet Mallesham Garu personally, listening to your stories about him was deeply inspiring. His invention to simplify the laborious Asu machine process revolutionized the lives of countless weavers. Learning that his life inspired the feature film Mallesham made me appreciate even more how grassroots innovations can transform society and earn national recognition.

Throughout the Yatra, every story narrated by you revealed another remarkable innovator. I was fascinated to learn about:

- A farmer who designed a simple weeding machine (Kalupu Theese Yantram) to reduce manual labour.
- A school student who invented a seed sowing device that places seeds at equal distances, ensuring better crop spacing.
- A simple two-step lifting device that makes erecting heavy electric poles easier and safer.
- An ingenious yet simple technique to align electric poles perfectly without expensive equipment.

These innovations may appear simple, but they solve real problems faced by ordinary people every day. They reminded me that innovation is not always about sophisticated technology; it is about making life easier.

As I reflected on these inspiring stories, one question stayed with me:

Where else can we find such extraordinary stories of ordinary people? The answer, in my experience, is Palle Srujana.

Whether through the inspiring stories shared during the Chinna Shodha Yatra or through the rich collection of innovations documented on the Palle Srujana website, this movement serves as a living repository of India's grassroots ingenuity. Every innovation carries not only a technical solution but also a story of resilience, creativity, and hope. These stories have inspired me to observe more carefully, think more deeply, and believe that meaningful innovations can emerge from anyone, anywhere.

Silence

The silent walk was one of the most unforgettable experiences of the Yatra. For nearly twenty minutes, we walked in complete silence under the soft glow of the moon, without any artificial lights. The only sounds were the gentle chirping of birds and the whispers of nature. The uneven village roads demanded our full attention, and with just a reassuring touch, Aditi and I guided each other safely through the darkness. That silent journey was far more than a walk—it was an experience of trust, mindfulness, companionship, and a deep connection with nature. It reminded me that some of life's most profound lessons are learned not through words, but through silence.

Hospitality

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Yatra was the love and care extended by the volunteers. No matter where we were walking, whenever it was time for tea, it somehow reached us. Every meal was served with warmth, affection, and genuine hospitality. It never felt like food prepared for participants; it felt like a meal lovingly served by our own family. Throughout the three days, not even for a single moment did we feel that we were away from our homes. The warmth of the volunteers, the hospitality of the villagers, and the togetherness of our co-yatris created a family far beyond blood relations. Their selfless service taught me that true hospitality is not measured by luxury but by the love with which it is offered.

Suggestions for Future Yatras

I would like to humbly share a few ideas.

Digital Story Archive

Each Yatri could upload one photograph, one reflection, one innovation story, and one learning after the Yatra. Over the years this would become a valuable knowledge repository.

Oral History Project

Every innovator has a life story. Recording those stories before they are lost would preserve invaluable knowledge for future generations. Each yatri or team of yatriis will take responsibility of one innovator and record the story in any form.

I would like to become part of this mission.

Not merely as a participant...

But as a volunteer...

A researcher...

An educator...

And someday, hopefully, an innovator.

My Personal Commitment

After returning from the Yatra, I have made a personal promise.

- I will introduce more students, educators and young innovators to Palle Srujana.
- I will encourage observation before invention.
- I will motivate students to solve real societal problems.
- I will write articles, create awareness through social media, prepare a Burrakatha on Palle Srujana, and share the stories of grassroots innovators with as many people as possible.

If, one day, I succeed in creating an innovation that benefits society, I will always remember where this journey truly began. It began on the roads of the 57th Chinna Shodha Yatra.

My Gratitude

- ❖ Thank you to every volunteer who served selflessly.
- ❖ Thank you to every innovator who shared knowledge.
- ❖ Thank you to every villager who welcomed us warmly.

- ❖ Thank you to every co-yatri who became family.
- ❖ Thank you my dear GPREC students Susmitha, Kavya, Katyayini, Arjun & Shahida.

And above all...

- ❖ Thank you, Brigadier P. Ganesham Sir, for reminding us that innovation is not merely about creating technology.

It is about improving lives.

You once protected the nation by guarding its borders.

Today, through Palle Srujana, you continue protecting India's greatest wealth—its people, their wisdom, and their creativity.

For that, my heartfelt pranams.

With deepest respect and gratitude,

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